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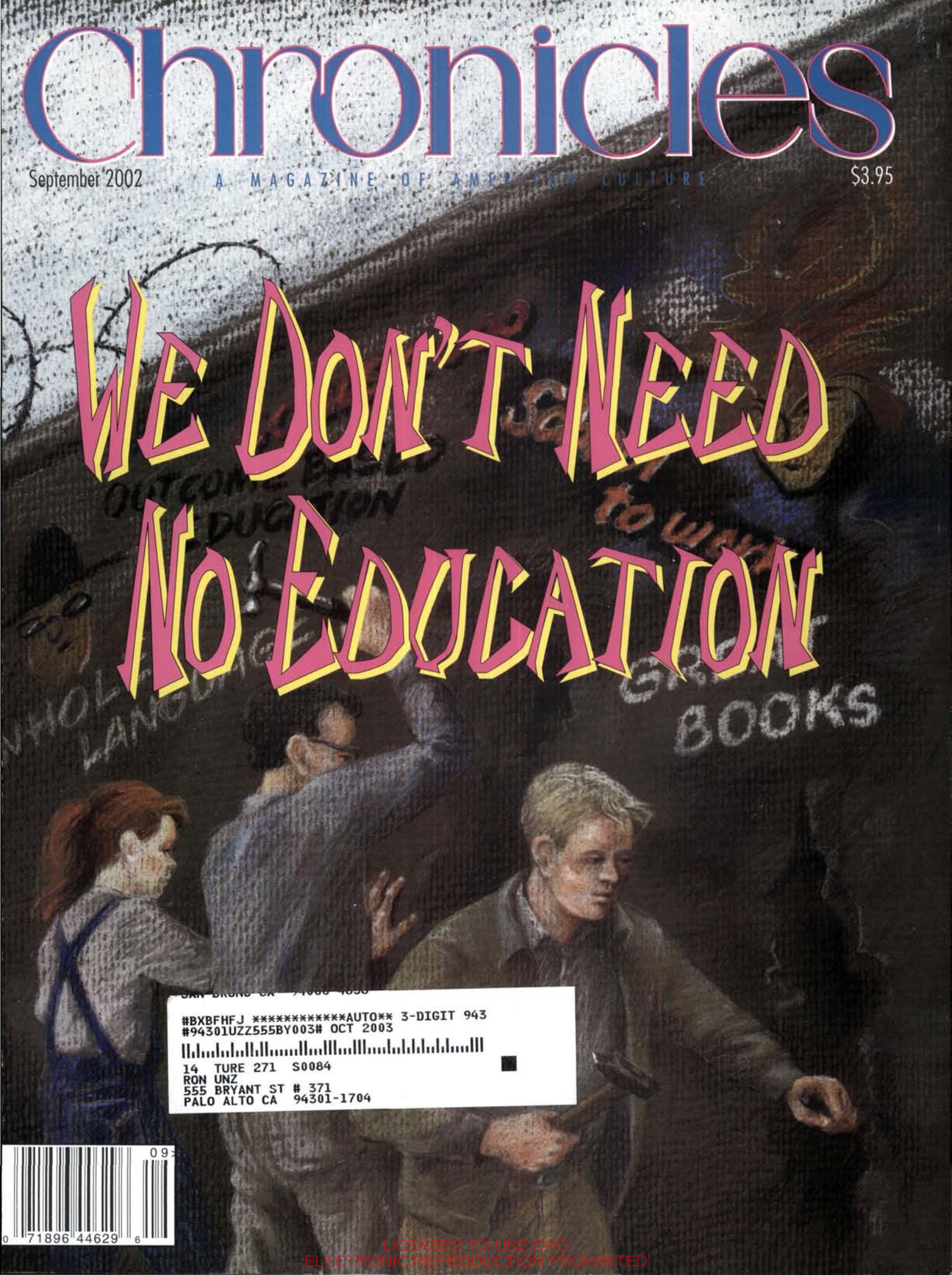

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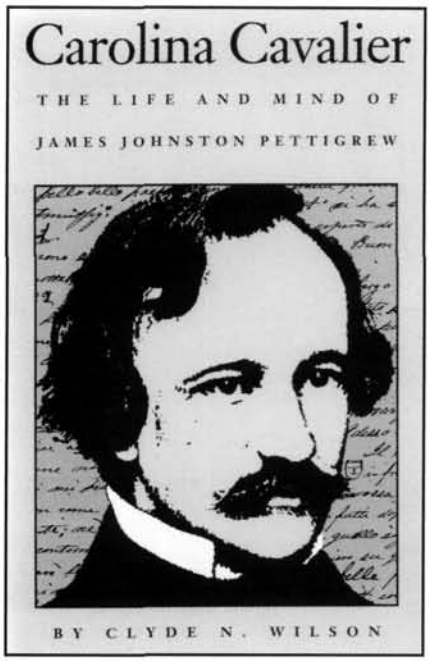

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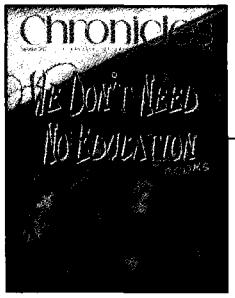

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On Consistency

In the April 30 issue of the *Remnant*, Christopher Ferrara cites a priest in New York who claims that the percentage of seminarians within his diocese who are homosexual may be *conservatively* estimated at 60 percent. If this is what Bishop Thomas Doran of Rockford (quoted in "*De Profundis*," *The Rockford Files*, June) refers to as high scrutiny, I can't even imagine what "relaxed standards" would resemble. Apparently, the postconciliar standard has been (and will continue to be) that pyromaniacs are O.K., but there must be no evidence of their having set fire to buildings.

Dr. Philip Jenkins' attempts to analyze the sexual scandals ("The Crime of Consistency," *Breaking Glass*, June) seem strangely acontexual as he prescinds them from canon law, the Church's moral teaching, etc.

We are confronting the same old thing: a Vatican that talks sternly and does nothing—at least as long as we're not confronting *really* serious stuff, like "Lefebvrism," in which case we have to bring the ax down. This is precisely the "laxity" Scott P. Richert mentioned in his June column. However, it's a bit more severe than this. Basically, the Vatican II documents talked about an explicit attempt to reconcile the Church's teaching with science. Fine. But then the Church decided that psychology was science and intimated that the Church's stance on homosexuality could be amended by the "discoveries" of the therapeutic industry. And there we have a postconciliar pose apotheosized: vague, gauzy, and, frankly, asking for trouble. And we've got it, in spades.

—*Phil Earvolino*
Chicago, IL

Mr. Richert Replies:

Dr. Jenkins is more than capable of defending himself, and he has done so on numerous occasions, including on *Chronicles*' website (*http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/News/NewsPJ040602.htm*). I am saddened, however, by the willingness of my good friend Phil Earvolino (and many other traditionalist Catholics) to base their arguments on *anecdotal estimates* of the percentage of homosexuals in Catholic seminaries (or in the priesthood) while dismissing Dr. Jenkins' arguments, which are based on *actual studies*. (During a recent interview on a local radio talk show here in Rockford, a well-known writer on Church sexual scandals claimed that homosexuality is a necessary condition for employment in the chancery offices of every diocese in the United States, a ridiculous statement that is easily disproved.) These attitudes simply confirm that far too many Catholics, frustrated (as I am) by the turmoil in the Church over the past 35 years, are willing to believe almost anything, as long as it reflects poorly on those whom they blame for the Church's woes. (That same willingness extends to traditionalist arguments that Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre was not validly excommunicated and that the See of Peter may soon be vacant.)

The disagreement between Mr. Earvolino and myself is not over questions of liturgy (for the past decade, I have attended the Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy and the Tridentine Mass almost exclusively) but over our respective attitudes toward the Church. Like many other traditionalists, he has trouble distinguishing between the statements or actions of certain priests and bishops (and the even the Pope) and Church teaching. This is illustrated by his statement (not backed up by citation) that "the Church decided that psychology was science and intimated that the Church's stance on homosexuality could be amended by the 'discoveries' of the therapeutic industry." But under the heading of "Homosexuality and Chastity," the Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraph 2357) states that the "psychological genesis [of homosexuality] remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

The Catechism goes on to state (in

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paragraph 2358) that homosexuals "are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition" and then explains (in paragraph 2359) how they can fulfill God's will: "Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection."

This seems rather straightforward. That certain bishops—for reasons of ideology, bureaucracy, or just plain human sinfulness—have acted in ways that contradict it does not mean that the Church's teaching has changed.

Finally, Mr. Earvolino is right: We do have trouble, in spades. That is precisely why he and other traditionalists should be engaging more actively in the life of the Church rather than pulling away from it. The Church Herself—with all of Her problems—is the saving remnant, not any one group of Christians.

On the Ghost of Islam

Tomislav Sunic's useful reminder of the dark legacy of Islam in the Balkans ("The Ghost of Islam in the Balkans, *Vital Signs*, June) is in need of a few corrections.

While most members of other SS units were volunteers, the Yugoslav "Schwaben" belonging to the Prinz Eugen Division were not. Heinrich Himmler wanted to turn the Balkans into an SS sphere of interest, and this was manifested in his imposition of exclusive authority over the *Volksdeutsche* in the southeast. The fall of Yugoslavia provided an opportunity for unbridled SS recruitment of ethnic Germans, not only in German-occupied Serbia (Banat) but also in the "Independent State of Croatia." This enlistment was *not* voluntary for the *Volksdeutsche* in the former Yugoslavia: Their leaders made a collective declaration on behalf of the membership that was binding on all.

Dr. Sunic's speculation about Kemal Ataturk's Slavic origins is off the mark. Mustafa Kemal was probably of Jewish ancestry. He denied this for reasons easy to understand at the time of his radical onslaught against Islamic traditions in Turkey, but it appears that his family belonged to the Sabbetaians, Turkish Jews who took Muslim names and outwardly behaved like Muslims but kept carefully guarded prayers and rituals. According to Jewish writer and publisher Itamar Ben-Avi, who met the young Turkish officer at the Kamenitz Hotel in Jerusalem in 1911, Kemal confided in him that he is a descendant of Sabbetai Zevi. As related in the *Jewish Post* (January 28, 1994), during their second meeting, ten days later, after drinking many rounds of *raki*, Mustafa Kemal recalled the following words from his childhood: "*Shema Yisra'el, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Ehad!*"

"That's our most important prayer, Captain," Ben-Avi said, impressed.

"And my secret prayer too, *cher monsieur*," Mustafa Kemal replied cheerfully.

Finally, Pavelic's construction of a mosque "in the center of Catholic Zagreb" did not reflect his multicultural liberalism but his sop to the Bosnian Muslims, whom he wanted to woo into accepting his claim that they were really "Croats of Islamic faith," one of the basic tenets of Ustasa ideology. It was also a prerequisite of practical politics, as only by asserting those Islamized Slavs' Croatness could Pavelic lay a claim to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Wehrmacht representative in Zagreb, Gen. Edmund Glaise von Hostenau, knew better when he declared: "Bosnian Muslims would follow the Croats because they have the power . . . but at all times they would certainly seek to protect their special Muslim interests. Any assimilation of Muslims by Croats is out of the question, because a Muslim remains a Muslim. Just as he was not really a Serb when he passed himself for one, he will not become a Croat now."

Unlike their German-speaking counterparts from northeastern Yugoslavia, the Muslims of Bosnia were true and enthusiastic volunteers for the SS "Hanjar" Division. By creating an SS division composed of Bosnian Muslims Himmler hoped to enhance relations with the Islamic world. One of his closest aides, *Obergruppenfuehrer* Gottlob Berger, said that, with the creation of a Muslim SS division, "a link is created for the first time between Islam and National-Socialism on an open, honest basis. It will be directed in terms of blood and race from the North, and in the ideological-spiritual sphere from the East."

—Srdja Trifkovic
Chicago, IL

On *Chronicles* Among the Ruins

Near the latter part of each month, I anticipate having my day brightened by the delivery of the current issue of *Chronicles*. It isn't the content that lifts my spirit so much as the unwavering commitment to truth, common sense, morality, and transcendent values.

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence," John Adams said.

I count on *Chronicles* for hard, unvarnished facts that are seldom, if ever, found in the prattling pages and pictures of our nation's mainstream media. In the pages of your magazine, thought—based on facts, logic, and a knowledge of history—is evident.

In this post-Christian era, it is refreshing to know that I am not alone in fearfully watching the rapid and seemingly inevitable unraveling of the American experiment.

For that remnant of our society still clinging to the traditional values that once made America the hope of mankind, *Chronicles* offers a respite from the drum-beating, "chicken-in-every-pot," political finger-pointing jingoism masking America's loss of community, liberty, and independence.

The consistent content of *Chronicles* serves as a reminder of Whittaker Chambers' gentle chiding of then-conservative firebrand William F. Buckley, Jr., in a letter nearly 50 years ago. The beaten Chambers told Buckley not to be concerned about the wreck of Western civilization because "It is already a wreck from within."

Chambers suggested that little could be accomplished except to nurture truth and preserve its flame until a day "ages hence, when a few men begin again to dare to believe there was once something else, that something else is thinkable, and need some evidence of what it was, and the fortifying knowledge that there were those who, at the great nightfall, took loving thought to preserve the tokens of hope and truth."

Thank you for your continuing and tireless efforts.

—Jim Panyard
Palmyra, PA

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THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is the only industry in which employees get more money—and raises and bonuses—for doing absolutely terrible jobs.

The American people have spent several hundreds of billions of dollars on our intelligence agencies over the last ten years, yet none of them ever hinted at, much less warned us, about the attacks of September 11.

We receive more accurate information from the television newscasts than we do from the CIA and other intelligence agencies. In fact, intelligence expert and author James Bamford said that the National Security Agency "found out about the attack by watching CNN!" (The NSA is the same agency for which we built a plush, $320-million state-of-the-art building a few years ago—at a cost of $320 per square foot. Then, again, *Congressional Quarterly* recently reported that we are giving the CIA a multi-billion-dollar increase—somewhere between $35 and $40 billion—for the new fiscal year.)

Our intelligence agencies have too many "experts" who want to stay in their vice-offices and write reports that almost no one sees and that do no good whatsoever. Late last year, *Insight Magazine* quoted one CIA veteran as saying that agents "don't live in the grungy, smelly fly-infested environments of the locals; they don't go to mosques and smoke-filled mud houses where the populations live; and almost no one in the CIA has language fluency, cultural experience and ethnic background allowing them to blend in."

One morning, a national TV program reported that the CIA would be on the "hot seat" in front of the Intelligence Committee that day. As a congressman, however, I know that no critics of the CIA are allowed by the leadership of either party to sit on that committee.

The cover of the June 10 *Newsweek* proclaimed, "Exclusive—The 9/11 Terrorists The CIA Should Have Caught," and the accompanying article claimed that the FBI was guilty of "clear failure to connect various vague clues that might have put them on the trail of the terrorists."

U.S. News & World Report highlighted "FBI Foul-Ups." Then the House passed a supplemental bill giving the Bureau $112 million more than the $4.27 billion already budgeted for 2002.

Ronald Kessler, who recently published a book about the FBI, wrote a column for the *Washington Post* on June 15, arguing that we should double the size of the Bureau, which already has 27,000 employees. Our Founding Fathers would be shocked by the magnitude of this federal police force—and even more so by the fact that, in addition to the FBI, almost every agency and department of the federal government now has its own police force. Joseph Califano, a Cabinet member and top advisor to the last three Democratic presidents, wrote in the *Post* last December that, because of our concerns about terrorism, we "are missing an even more troubling danger: the extraordinary increase in federal police personnel and power." He was referring to the federalizing of screeners at airports, something that he said goes very much against our tradition of leaving most law enforcement to local authorities.

I am in my 14th year in Congress. I have seen some pretty surprising things in that time, but even I could not believe the shocking rate of expansion of the new Transportation Security Administration (TSA). There were fewer than 28,000 screeners at U.S. airports before September 11. TSA officials told us before the passage of the Aviation Security Bill that they would need 33,000. Immediately after passage, they upped the figure to 40,000. Then, only seven months later, the TSA decided that it would need 72,000 employees, including approximately 3,500 "shoe bin runners."

Secretary John Magaw, according to one senior appropriator, has already hired 140 of his old buddies from the Secret Service for the TSA at salaries of up to $150,000—and they are allowed to continue drawing their full government pensions.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service recently sent visas to two of the dead September 11 hijackers. To excuse this embarrassment, they claimed that the INS is underfunded and needs better computers. (This is an agency to which Congress has given a 250-percent budget increase in the last eight years, about ten times the rate of inflation.) I am a low-tech person living in a high-tech world, but I am told that, since the technology is moving so fast, new computers are obsolete the day they are taken out of the box. I can tell you with certainty that, thanks to the deep pockets of the federal government, federal employees have better, more expensive technologies than almost any private businesses. Still, it is impossible to satisfy the government's appetite for money or land.

Sadly, almost every department or agency of the federal government is attempting to profit from the tragedies of September 11 by increasing its size, its power, and, especially, its funding.

—Rep. John J. Duncan, Jr.

ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY, for all their essential powerlessness in worldly terms, are never as inconsequential as might be supposed. How about those great English accents, for instance? How elegantly the archbishop of the hour undertakes to speak for and to an Anglican Communion increasingly disunited in theological outlook, joined by habit and custom as much as anything else: not fully Protestant; not popish enough to become Roman (especially in the sex-scandal era); tolerant; tasteful; influential out of proportion to actual numbers. And how assiduously an archbishop's words get reported, not least in an almost-faithless England. It matters—up to a point, at least—who holds the job.

The man who will hold the job for possibly the next 18 years (until age 70) is Rowan Douglas Williams, shaggy, white-bearded archbishop of Wales, scholar, author, left-wing commentator on public affairs. Williams received the nod from Prime Minister Tony Blair in July. A tide of speculation instantly engulfed the event. Might Williams split the communion? Would he, please, finally split the rotten thing in order that serious Anglicans could get on to serious religion?

There is, naturally, no knowing in matters touching the divine. It would be silly to project the outcome of a Williams archbishopric, though, Heaven help us, many are projecting it now. All one knows is what one knows. And what is that in Williams' case?

His left-wing politics stand out most flagrantly. Let's just say that Williams would never have been Maggie Thatcher's choice. (As it happened, Thatcher's pick for archbishop, a braw ex-tank com-

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mander named Robert Runcie, disappointed her when he proved less keen on capitalism and the Falklands war than she had hoped.) Williams, a brainy man, has made a number of, frankly, brainless remarks suggesting that the United States should counter terror with measures short of military force. Lately, he has been ululating about the prospective evil of attacking Saddam Hussein without first obtaining the concurrence, God save the mark, of the United Nations.

It is true that opposition to military "adventurism" wins him some admirers on the right—including, I venture, readers of this magazine. Even so, look at it this way: At a time of moral disintegration, and with Christianity shrinking in England almost to the vanishing point (England—the home of Wesley, Cranmer, Chesterton, and Lewis!), it seems precarious for a spiritual leader to expend precious breath critiquing military policy.

Oh, yes, ummm-hmmm—Christianity equals peace. The peace of the grave, maybe. Christians who sit waiting for Williams-like moral inspiration to seize the leadership of Al Qaeda and Hamas, and of the Baghdad Baathists, are waiting for their own mass funerals.

There is a bit more to the matter. Williams' published views on theology—he has, to date, written or edited 14 learned tomes—bespeak a mind fond of nuance. There is nothing inherently wrong with nuance. Maybe the world needs more of it. On the other hand, what the world truly appears to need more of is clarity: more, not less, of the stark encounters with secularity in which, as we say in Texas, Christians tell others how the cow ate the cabbage.

Williams seems not quite the man for this task. Love of scholarship gets in the way. Oh, look—another distinction! Let us hold it to the light, watch its colors change! Look, world!

The Williams *Weltanschauung* (if we truly know enough to call it that) works thus with respect to sexuality and feminism—which are sometimes the same topic, examined from different angles. If, as Williams says, he is pro-life, what would be wrong with making some headlines by summoning Anglicans to a full theological view of life? Is not saving unborn life a mission on the same level as saving the lives of soldiers and civilians caught in a war zone?

Williams is a warm friend to the priesting of women—another acutely feminist issue. He would even be, he says, "entirely happy with women bishops." As it happens, the issue of women priests continues to divide Anglicans the world over. The new archbishop has served notice now of which side he is on.

On the broader topic of sexuality, Williams amiably acknowledges ordaining a candidate for the priesthood who "had a [homosexual] background but wasn't going to push it or make a scandal of it." Will that candidate be the last one? Unlikely. "I truly cannot imagine a better choice for the job from our point of view," says the leader of homosexual Episcopalians, the Rev. Michael Hopkins.

These are some of the things we know about Rowan Douglas Williams. There is much we have still to learn. It would be unfair to pronounce sentence on him too early in the process. Some who call themselves conservatives speak well of him; they say he will show his mettle in due course. He may. That is the possibility always to be held out. Omniscience before the fact degrades the Omniscient.

But to back away from prediction is not to ignore storm warnings, starting with the public record. The Anglican Communion is frailer in spirit than it has been in a long time. The priesting of women and the abolition of the old liturgical unity that flowed from essentially similar Books of Common Prayer saps feelings of brotherhood and sisterhood. The churches of Africa are burgeoning at the same time that the churches of white Anglicanism—England, Scotland, Wales, the United States, Canada, New Zealand—give off a sound like Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" tide: a "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar." Racial and cultural styles fail to account for all the difference. African Anglicans are poor and exuberant. White Anglicans are rich and bored. Nor are the Communion's tribulations peculiar to the Communion.

The conditions for recovery, given God's omnipotence, are ever heartening, ever fruitful. I just can't tell how much longer the varied voices of recovery will include those cultivated, oh-so-English accents the Anglican world has loved so long. Loved too long and too well, it may prove.

—*William Murchison*

TO ARM PILOTS or not to arm—that is, apparently, an even more important question than the debate over whether or not we should allow unions, seniority rules, and affirmative action to hamstring every new effort to preserve national security. George Bush wants a free hand with the unions, but his administration doesn't want airline pilots to be armed. Why? Pilots have another job to do. But so do most people who carry a gun. Even policemen spend very little time shooting criminals or defending themselves.

The pilots themselves, for the most part, would like to be armed—and who can blame them? These are men—most of them former military officers—who are trusted everyday to fly planes worth millions of dollars and to guarantee the safety of hundreds of passengers. Who better to trust with a firearm?

The simple answer is that the government does not want anyone to be able to defend himself. This is not because of any sinister plot; it is in the nature of bureaucracy to assume that people are helpless (and more than a little depraved). As a man and a Texan, President Bush probably likes both guns and the people who like guns, but as a public official, he cannot escape the prejudice (shared by the big-city police chiefs and sheriffs, who are now, for the most part, bureaucrats rather than lawmen) that the people are cattle: They are helpless as individuals, but, *en masse*, they are all too likely to stampede and cause destruction.

As everyone with at least half a brain knows, guns have never been a root cause of American violence. The Wild West, as historian Roger D. McGrath has shown, was peaceful in comparison with big Eastern cities, both then and now. The problem is deracinated people, divorced from community, kinfolk, and religion. Americans, for the most part, are not a violent people. If certain ethnic minorities are excluded from crime statistics, the United States is hardly more violent than Scotland.

The Balkans has become proverbial for violence, and yet, before the breakup of Yugoslavia, a visitor was safer in Belgrade or Sarajevo than he was in Des Moines. Traveling several times in Montenegro, I have watched, in the Podgorica airport, as tall, rough-looking Montenegrins in business suits surrendered their firearms before going through the metal detectors. The guns were stored on the plane and returned to their owners when they arrived at the Belgrade airport. One evening, I saw enough guns in the airport to have staged a coup in Panama, but since Montenegrins typically do not

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shoot for no reason, this is nothing to worry about, so long as you have not double-crossed someone in a smuggling deal, seduced his wife, or killed his cousin.

Even the wildest Montenegrin has a Christian respect for innocent life. This is what divides them from Muslims, in and out of the Balkans, and from the American officials who wage war on civilians rather than send troops into battle. Last month in Saudi Arabia, several high-school girls, trying to escape from a burning building but lacking the proper headgear that indicates their subhuman status, were forced back in by Saudi police to die a horrible death. These Saudis apparently would rather kill their women than treat them as human beings. These are the people we are not allowed to prevent from entering the United States or to profile ethnically as potential terrorists.

But if profiling were allowed, who would do it, and who would stop the Islamic terrorists at the border? Agents of the same government that bombed the Serbs, inflicted two million civilian casualties in Iraq through an economic blockade, and is now planning to give the Iraqis a second dose of ultimate revenge?

Christians are truly caught between a rock and a hard place. We wish only to be allowed to defend ourselves and our way of life, but we are being threatened by determined Christian-hating enemies in the Muslim world and by an increasingly dangerous Christian-hating regime that wants us to inform on one another, turn in our guns, and let them refuse to defend us in planes, trains, and automobiles. Since resistance, as the aliens say, is futile, the only sane response is to make the best of life where you live it and to prepare mentally for the much worse times to come.

—Thomas Fleming

VLADIMIR PUTIN's strained performance at a June 25 Kremlin press conference—timed to precede his departure for a G-8 summit in Canada—has led many Russian observers to reassess the popular image of the Russian president as a "strong hand" who had whipped the oligarchs into line and restored order in the long-suffering "Land of the Firebird."

Putin appeared relaxed and confident until he was asked a series of questions about the conspicuous public activity of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, who has lately made a number of public appearances, voicing opinions that have often contradicted the Putin administration's official line. Most Kremlin watchers believe Yeltsin is reminding Putin to whom he owes his post—and that, as one observer put it, "there are other fish in the sea." The still-influential "family" or "Yeltsin clan"—the former president and the group of relatives, political operatives, gangsters, oligarchs, and media magnates who surround him—could always choose to back someone else in the 2004 presidential elections. Thus, according to this theory, Putin—who has, from time to time, attempted to assert his independence from the family—was being warned.

At this point in the news conference, Putin stumbled. He attempted to gloss over the apparent contradictions between the Kremlin's official line and Yeltsin's views, particularly on the prospective union with Belarus. Though Putin claimed to be his own man, he added that he always listened to the opinions of the "Father of Russian Democracy" and stressed the continuity between the Yeltsin presidency and his own. When asked to point out one issue that he has decided in direct opposition to Yeltsin's wishes, Putin lamely mentioned the revival of the Soviet anthem's melody: "It's clear that if Boris Yeltsin were president we would not have restored such symbols of the state as the tune of the Soviet national anthem." The reaction in the Russian media was immediate: Putin had strengthened the case of critics who had long seen the ex-KGB officer as a front man for the Yeltsin team, passing up yet another opportunity to assert himself and put the "family" in its place.

Nevertheless, the biggest recent blow to Putin's tough-guy image came in May, during the inter-clan battle for control of the management (and, thus, the "financial flows") of the largely state-owned Slavneft oil company. Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, long seen as the family's creature, used every political and administrative lever at his disposal to place a family man in the Slavneft presidency, blocking out rival clans and embarrassing Putin, who has attempted to convince President Bush and potential Western investors that he has cleaned up official corruption and forced the oligarchs to play by the rules. Putin said nothing about the scandal, which reached the point of armed confrontation at the Slavneft headquarters on the very day of his Moscow summit with Bush. The family secured its position at Slavneft with Kasyanov's help, despite constant claims from Putin that the time of insider deals and favoritism was over. So much for keeping the clans "equidistant" from the Kremlin throne, not to mention away from the state budget trough.

The latest round of Russian political machinations has implications for Washington. Yeltsin's warnings to Putin, for example, should serve as a warning to the Bush White House as well: First, in view of the deep corruption of the Russian governing class, Bush should squelch any future Kremlin attempts to solicit financial aid from the West (remembering that Yeltsin himself said of the now-infamous disappearing 1998 IMF loan, "Lord knows where that went!"). Second, in view of Putin's vulnerability, the White House should not base its Russia policy on Bush's personal relations with the Russian president. If Putin doesn't behave himself according to the family's lights, he could be removed, forcing Bush to look for a new "best friend"—and, possibly, negating the largely informal and vague agreements he has made with Putin. Bush's predecessors hung on to their personal attachments to both Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin far too long, losing opportunities to establish contacts with up-and-coming leaders and throwing good money after bad down the emerging oligarchy's financial drain. Bush and company should keep their collective eye on the strategic ball: Mr. Bush can cooperate with the Russian leadership on matters of strategic importance (arms reduction, resisting the expansion of militant Islam, sales of Russian oil and gas to the United States) without either liking or trusting the current occupant of the Kremlin.

—Denis Petrov

"HATE CRIMES" legislation and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were the topics of the June 12 edition of C-SPAN's *Washington Journal*, which featured a debate between Kenneth Connor of the Family Research Council and Elizabeth Birch of the Human Rights Campaign, "America's largest gay and lesbian organization."

Connor criticized the federal intrusiveness that would result from expanding antidiscrimination law to include homosexuals. He argued that the federal government has no business dictating employment criteria to proprietors. Birch asserted that this meant Connor ulti-

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mately wanted to repeal Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which he denied. To the contrary: Connor claimed that Title VII's classes are legitimate but that adding sexual orientation would be wrong because homosexuality is a behavior.

Curious if the Family Research Council has formalized this opinion, I went to its website and found an assessment by Dr. Timothy J. Dailey (*http://www.frc.org/get/if01g1.cfm*) of the legislation in question: the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). "It grants special rights to homosexuals while ignoring those of employers," he writes. "The federal government should not force private businesses to abandon their moral principles." However, Dr. Dailey also defends the current antidiscrimination framework as part of his case against ENDA: "[ENDA] is misleadingly referred to as a logical extension of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act. While the Civil Rights Act was enacted to protect the rights of racial minorities, ENDA is aimed at providing heightened protections for a particular sexual behavior—homosexuality."

Yes, homosexuality is a behavior, unlike race, sex, etc. From a proprietary perspective, though, what does that matter? For example, say a business owner refuses to hire applicants X, Y, and Z: X, because he is homosexual; Y, because he is Hispanic; and Z, because he is Hindu. Whether these acts of discrimination are equally judicious may be debated, but each should be within the business owner's discretion. Each is a legitimate decision as a matter of property rights, and racial or religious minorities should have no right to force employers to hire them.

The business owner's decisions may be myopic or rude, but they don't abridge freedom. Antidiscrimination laws, on the other hand, trespass upon proprietary autonomy and threaten expropriation for particular exercises thereof. Prof. Richard Epstein observes that "private property entails the right to exclude others from one's premises." Antidiscrimination laws undermine this vital entailment through an aggressive intolerance masked by a compassionate patina. The inclusion that Title VII and its progeny purport to foster is predicated upon coercion—that is, violence.

Just as the criminalization of sodomy implies a mandate to criminalize fornication, the criminalization of racial or religious discrimination implies a mandate to criminalize any form of discrimination. Tyranny is an incremental pestilence, and surrendering one attribute of freedom facilitates the destruction of freedom itself. Mr. Connor and the Family Research Council correctly argue against ENDA; it is irreconcilable with constitutional order and the rights of ownership. They fail, however, to recognize ENDA's roots in Title VII. To oppose one and support the other is tenuous conservatism at best.

—Myles Kantor

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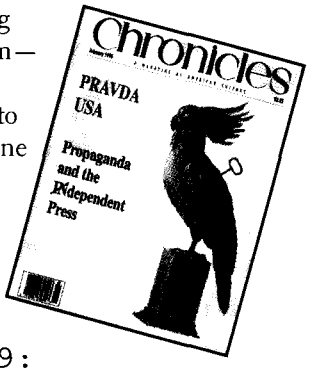
Our poetry this month is provided by **Constance Rowell Mastores** of Oakland, California. Her poems have appeared in the *Lyric*, *Press*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Boulevard*, and *Artweek*, among others.

Our cover and inside illustrations are provided by St. Petersburg native **Anatol Woolf**, who, in addition to freelance work, has designed sets for theaters in Russia and provided illustrations for St. Petersburg Textbook Publishers. Since coming to America in 1987, Mr. Woolf has been a frequent contributing artist to *Chronicles*, as well as to the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, *Policy Review*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Legal Times*, and *Cricket*. Mr. Woolf works with a variety of materials, from watercolors to pencil to acrylic. Further samples of his work are available on his website: *www.netcom.com/~a.woolf/*.

We all have journalists we love to hate—the nincompoop who reads the lies on the evening news, the know-it-all editorial writer who has never read a serious book. You can help them—and your fellow Americans—by giving your favorite Media Moron a gift subscription to *Chronicles*. For only $19, you can send America's most thoughtful conservative magazine to Peter Jennings or your local anchorman—or, if you can't make up your mind, let us pick one (or several) for you. (We have a long list!) We'll even send you a certificate, suitable for framing, naming the brain-starved hack you have agreed to sponsor and feed. Seriously, journalists (or the assistants who write their copy) need to hear the truth, and you can give it to them—and increase *Chronicles*' circulation and influence.



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by Thomas Fleming

Against the Obscurantists

It was a muggy day in late July, and I had gone to the back of the church to rest on crutches and take some pressure off my sprained ankle. Taking advantage of my condition to stand in the way of one of the church's too-few fans, I noticed a woman feeding candy to her little girls. The mother was not so young as not to know that eating in church is not permitted, but the name of the candy—"Bible Bar"—apparently was enough to excuse the lapse, as it excuses coloring books, so long as the coat of many Crayola colors belongs to Joseph. How many lapses in taste and judgment that single word "Bible" seems to justify: comic books, cartoons, and videos that are, apart from the biblical storylines, indistinguishable from what is shown on the Cartoon Network, ahistorical and un-Christian nonsense like *The Prince of Egypt*, and the bad puns and casual blasphemies that adorn the billboards of so many churches.

Christian faith is no guarantee of good taste, sound logic, or common sense—it is not supposed to be—and the Scriptures, suitably misread, have been used to justify polygyny and sexual license, liturgical dancing and grape juice for communion, both capitalism and socialism, going to church on Saturday or not celebrating Christmas, and all of the cults whose members spend their time not on prayer and good works but on calculating the exact date of the end of the world.

Matthew Arnold was altogether too smug when he declared that a man who knew only the Bible knew not even that one book, but he did have a point. The Bible provides the essentials for man's understanding of what he must do to be saved, but it is not a textbook on mathematics or philosophy, much less an encyclopedia of all that has been known. Without some grounding in the principles of Greek philosophy, Christians may be led, on the basis of proof-texts, into the most destructive heresies. The heresies of Arians and Monophysites were refuted only partly by Scripture and tradition. Time after time, St. Athanasius relies on fundamental logical rules and on the Greek understanding of being. It is all very well for an educated and logical scholar like Luther to rely, as he believed, solely on Scripture, but Luther was made aware in his own lifetime of the dangers that uneducated people run when they set off on a biblical pilgrimage without the compass of reason and the map of tradition.

The Scriptures will be an important part of any program of Christian education, but how they are to be studied is an important question that has been answered in different ways. St. Augustine several times addresses the problem of interpreting the Bible, and while some may shy away from his preference for allegorical interpretation, we can do no better than to adopt his guiding principle: If an interpretation strengthens us in our commitment to carrying out the two Great Commandments, then it is, at least, wholesome if not accurate—and *vice versa*.

Augustine toyed with the idea of a strictly Christian curriculum, but the only period during which ancient Christian parents were willing to deny their children the fruits of classical education was during Julian the Apostate's brief reign, when he forbade Christians to teach or study pagan literature and philosophy. When the emperor died, the project faded away, though it has echoes in Augustine and Cassiodorus and even in John Henry Newman's discussion of a Catholic curriculum in England. The only educational choice, in Augustine's time and ours, has been between the classical curriculum and barbarism.

There is a difference between a curriculum and a book or even a set of books. The Bible, studied with care and under supervision, may be the only book an uneducated Christian *needs*, but it cannot be the sole basis of a Christian education that is fitting people either for a useful career or for a civilized life; and if the Book will not suffice, how much more deficient are other books, no matter how great or how many? The collapse of classical education inspired many well-intentioned movements in the humanities, but most of them are mere lists of books. If the purpose of the old curriculum was to produce men like Cicero and Augustine and Burke—good men skilled in speaking and writing—what is the object of a Great Books curriculum?

"Well, obviously, to read great books," a professor at one of the St. Johns Colleges might reply, "and, in reading them, to be exposed to what Arnold described as the best that has been thought and said."

"And . . . ?" We persist until we reach the conclusion that the Five Foot Shelf or some other equally arbitrary set of books will mysteriously make us better persons leading richer lives.

This pious wish demands too much suspension of disbelief. The old curriculum aimed at training the mind and the tongue by teaching correct Latin and Greek and by holding up classical models for imitation. No one would claim that the speeches of Lysias teach the student anything more important than a few principles of Attic law or the conventions of Greek rhetoric, but Lysias was a valuable tool in teaching Attic Greek. The classical curriculum was a rigorous form of mental training and discipline in difficult formal languages that served as mental calisthenics; Great Books programs—for the most part—are amateur sports that teach students to be proud of their ability to talk of books they cannot read in the original language.

The test of any such program is the amount of Greek, Latin, and modern languages they require—and I do not mean simply on paper. Some Great Books programs require several years of Greek, but one of my students—a very bright refugee from a Great Books school where she had taken two years of Greek—still did not know a complete paradigm of a simple verb. She might as well have gone to a seminary, where future ministers of the Gospel learn to use a dictionary to find the Greek words with which they will pepper their early sermons.

Another major problem with these reading programs is the eclectic selection of texts. One Catholic college of deservedly high reputation, after exposing its students to two years of the classics in translation, turns them loose—without the guidance provided by lectures—on Bacon and Montaigne, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, Spinoza, Kant, Freud, and Jung. These same students, if they were not so busy sipping the poisonous inanities of Marx and Freud, might learn more Latin than is included in Whee-

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lock's simplified first-year Latin textbook, which (*mirabile dictu*) they take two years to finish.

Great Books programs tend to be heavy on philosophy and science and light on literature. Intellectual clarity is, of course, desirable, but the moral imagination is not fed on conic sections. The two Thomas Mores (unaffiliated institutions in Ft. Worth and New Hampshire) are honorable exceptions to this trend, and the small Ft. Worth college deserves special praise for offering more than four years of Latin and Greek.

There are Christians who will poohpooh any call for pagan learning. How important to Christians, they ask, can a merely literary education be? C.S. Lewis, when asked to specify the relationship between the poetry that was the subject of his professional study and the Christian faith he had embraced after years of reflection as an adult, replied that there was no necessary connection. This straightforward answer is true, up to a point, but it is an equally true response to questions about cleanliness or courtesy, beauty or intelligence.

Some good things in human life, such as the virtues of honesty, chastity, and courage, are taught explicitly in the Gospels, but the arts of civilization are of a more equivocal status. Wisdom is extolled in the Old Testament and inculcated, even in a philosophical form, in the New. And yet the vanity of human learning is also contemned as foolishness.

Christians have never spoken with unanimous voice on the value of the civilized arts. Some early apologists condemned pagan literature and philosophy as the snares of the tempter; others have treated them as indifferent—neither bad nor good except insofar as they are instruments of Christ or Antichrist; still others have seen good books, at least, as things good in themselves, though not necessary to salvation. C.S. Lewis spoke of a sub-Christian literary culture as a wholesome corrective to the anti-Christian culture of modern times and as a preparation of the ground for the planting of the Christian seed.

This topic has divided Christians of nearly every generation. Augustine and St. Jerome, for example, though they agreed on the possible dangers of pagan literature, went in different directions. Though Jerome repented of his classicism after Christ appeared in a dream and accused him of being not *Christianus* but *Ciceronianus*, Augustine—try as he might some times—could never be anything but a civilized man.

The early reformers were all classically trained, though many of their successors, in repudiating reason and order, also rejected humane learning. The difference of opinion may be seen in the Apostles Paul and Peter. Though Peter supped with Cornelius the Centurion, and Paul spoke frequently of human wisdom as foolishness, Peter remained, so far as we have any knowledge, an uneducated fisherman, while Paul, in preaching to the Athenians on the Areopagus, not only availed himself of the commonplaces of Greek philosophy but even quoted the pagan poet Pindar.

Christian obscurantism, though it may not always be dangerous to the soul, is an entirely destructive phenomenon. Many of the earliest Christian apologetic writings that have been preserved are naive or (what is worse) disingenuous attacks on the brutality and immorality of the Homeric gods and the irrationality and conflicts of different philosophical traditions—exactly the kind of stuff you hear from village atheists and high-school teachers today when they ridicule the story of Jonah, the parting of the Red Sea, the brutal genocide inflicted by the Israelites on the peoples of Canaan, the theological disagreements between Catholics and Protestants and among the different shades of Protestant.

The really bizarre aspect of these attacks is the apologists' inability to understand how easily such arguments could be turned against themselves. Though some Roman citizens were attracted to Jewish monotheism and to the sublime writings of the prophets, the average Greek or Roman intellectual found the Old Testament, taken at face value, far more barbaric and absurd than any of the poetic fables in Hesiod or Ovid.

The Christian polemics, usually carried out by half-educated men, were not aimed simply at pagan religion but at all aspects of pagan civilization, including its literature and philosophy. Justin Martyr is unusually prudent and restrained in his apology addressed to the young Antonines, but even Clement of Alexandria, although he regarded Greek philosophy as a divine gift, fills his *Protrepticus kata Hellenas* with bitter vituperation, a harsh note that echoes through the succeeding centuries. It is a sign of the terrible cultural shock inflicted by the Goths, when they sacked Rome in A.D. 410, that Augustine fills page after page of *De Civitate Dei* with childish polemics against the evils of pagan Rome. Rome, he argued—and, by extension, all pagan civilization—was cursed from the beginning when Romulus slew Remus. Of course, Cain killed Abel, but that is because Cain represents the City of Man, while Abel was innocent. Remus, by contrast, was in a power struggle with his brother. That would be news to Livy, who represents the brothers as good friends up to the point that the light-hearted Remus leaped back and forth over the walls his brother was building. Such aberrations as murder or incest or bastardy are universally part of the founding myths of cities and nations, but Augustine, in his obscurantist zeal to repudiate the world in which he had grown up, was willing to tell any tale that advanced his cause.

Too many Christians today, when dealing with matters of science and history and classical literature, follow Augustine's example. Perhaps it is because they know that our civilization is also collapsing around us. But ours is the God of truth, not the Prince of Lies. If the neo-Darwinists are right on the mechanisms of evolution, that is information to be interpreted by educated Christian theologians. To flee from scientific evidence, where it may be valid, is a sign of cowardice, not of faith.

Some Christians, in fleeing from the pagan inheritance, think they can be theological Christians and cultural Jews. The results—the evangelical subculture in the United States—are appalling. Religion, in this case, becomes a justification for philistinism. There are wealthy evangelicals—and Lutherans and Catholics—who own two cars and take expensive family vacations but express contempt for a "pagan learning" they have never experienced and will not take the time or spend the money to make available to their children.

The complex civilization that is disappearing so rapidly was not constructed solely from Christian materials, and unless the faithful are prepared to live in the desert, feeding on locusts and wild honey, they should be preparing themselves and their children to be stewards who will guard what is left of our precious inheritance. An affluent Christian who is willing to drive a car, surf the net, demand his rights in court, and eat with a knife and fork has no valid excuse for not learning Latin and Greek.

c

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All Souls Day

For Kathy Horn

Constance Rowell Mastores

Matins and knells, the business of before
and after, dark forest unloading its charge
of birds, gathering them back, substracting, and so forth.
To all this, I yield. To the strutting stare

of rooster, red aster's iridescent plumes,
kimono, stripped of body, hung with sorrow-
sleeves for decoration in a window,
hem caught in a swirl of embittered autumn,

canticles, prayers, blueing fields where white
oxen perform their chaste processionals,
sheaves bound and piled at the roadside, valley of mists
where now the applepear and shriveled fig

dissolve their trust, chill damp of cloisters
where souls gather and breathe their residue
of sighs; and flesh that's made its covenant
with death—today I come to you with flowers.

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by Philip Jenkins

The Butler Didn't Do It

I would like to try my hand at detective stories, but I'm having some problems coming up with plausible conclusions. Let me give you an example: I'm currently writing a book in which it's obvious from the first page that the butler did it, and, as the book goes on, this conclusion is steadily reinforced by a mountain of new evidence. Then, in the last paragraph, I bring in the surprise ending by saying, "Actually, the butler didn't do it. It was someone else altogether (never mind who), and there's a very good explanation for all the evidence that seemed to point to the butler. THE END." For some reason, no publisher is interested.

What makes me think that my story should be saleable is that it definitely meets federal standards of criminal investigation. I am thinking primarily of the response to the anthrax attacks mounted against the United States in late 2001, in which overwhelming evidence pointed to culprits associated with Middle Eastern and Islamic extremism—and that evidence has grown stronger over the past year. Yet, by fiat, federal investigators decided—for transparent political reasons—that these crimes were the work of some other party. If nobody seems bothered by this inconsistency, why should they be bothered by my mystery novel?

The case for a Middle Eastern connection can be spelled out easily. The attacks began within days of September 11, showing that someone had been preparing the assault for some time. A second wave of anthrax letters started immediately after the U.S.-British attack on Afghanistan. Observers familiar with the Middle East were struck by the distinctive handwriting on the envelopes used to deliver the anthrax spores, since it slanted in a way that is very common for people who originally learned to write in a language whose orthography flows from right to left—such as Arabic, or possibly Farsi. But the most convincing evidence for a Middle Eastern linkage comes when we consider the first outbreaks of anthrax in Florida, which occurred, in every case, within a couple of miles of where the hijackers had been living. It looks as if the terrorists, or associates unknown, were using a newspaper office there for a dry run to see if anthrax could be used effectively against a future political target. Also, in Florida, we know that Muhammad Atta was trying to get hold of crop dusters. And medical evidence suggests that at least two of the hijackers had shown symptoms of cutaneous anthrax in the months before September 11. Just how would they have been exposed, if they had not actually been handling these materials?

All of which makes it astounding that, last November, the FBI announced that the anthrax attacks had nothing to do with the Middle East and were, in reality, the work of a lone "mad scientist," a biowarfare equivalent of the Unabomber. Among the evidence supporting this claim was that the anthrax spores used were quite low quality, "bathtub" material, not real weapons-grade spores. (Did anyone notice the story a couple of months later saying that the spores actually *were* weaponized and could only have been produced in a government lab?) The new interpretation meant that the FBI could then start doing what it does best: dreaming up profiles of the Unsub—that's "Unknown Subject" in FBI-speak—and generally trying to justify their existence.

By the time this essay appears in print, the question of who sent the anthrax might be entirely settled through new forensic evidence or even a confession. At the start of August, the FBI seemed to be getting closer to identifying as a clear suspect an American biochemist named Stephen Hatfill, who worked at the research center at Fort Detrick, Maryland—though, as I'll suggest, there are good reasons to be suspicious of this linkage. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the culprit was, indeed, a mad scientist as portrayed in the FBI profile and that all the highly suggestive Middle Eastern connections prove to be bogus. Even so, we still need to explain why one very well-substantiated story was rejected for a much more speculative alternative.

Ultimately, the decision was political. Then as now, the Bush administration was deeply divided over what to do with Iraq, the nation that was probably the source of the anthrax spores. While the

Defense Department wanted Saddam's head, the State Department wanted peace, primarily to maintain the illusion of a U.S. alliance with the oil producers of the Gulf. If the anthrax investigation convincingly pointed to the Middle East, an enraged U.S. public would have been galvanized to take out Iraq. Such a course would have been all the more perilous at a time when Colin Powell was trying to calm the nerves of "friendly" Arab states over the war then raging in Afghanistan. Not coincidentally, the FBI revelation that they had a lead suspect of unimpeachably American origins was precisely timed to coincide with the congressional hearings over Iraq in progress that very day, in which a battery of expert Cassandras were warning that any military action against that country would unleash the apocalypse. The identification of Hatfill as prime suspect should be seen as yet another of the heavy-handed leaks issued about that time in pursuit of the State Department's goal of keeping Saddam Hussein in power, while not derailing Secretary Powell's chances of winning his much-desired Nobel Peace Prize.

A non-Middle Eastern culprit for the anthrax attacks simply *had to be found*, regardless of the cost in truth or plausibility, and the FBI delivered. I have no idea why the media bought the story so universally and so uncritically; I'm not an expert in abnormal psychology. But they bought it.

So does the conclusion to my mystery novel still seem ridiculous? If the feds can get away with this sort of thing, why can't I? <c>

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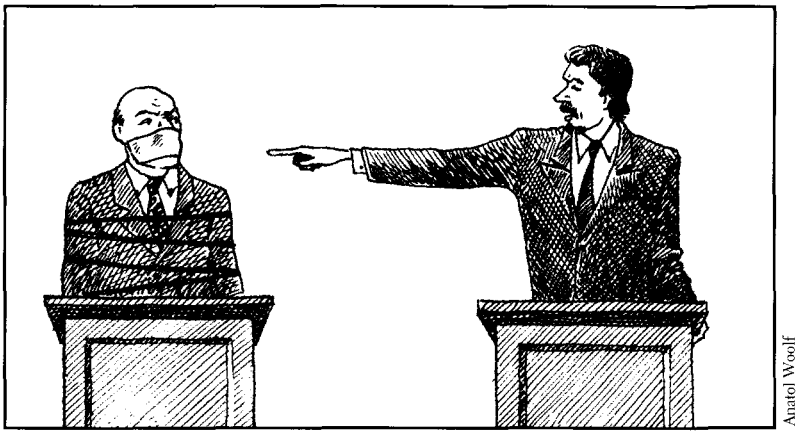
Tales From the Politically Correct Crypt

"Just the Facts, Ma'am"

by Roger D. McGrath



Anatol Woolf

Our nation is clearly in the midst of a culture war. The most important battles are not being fought in Washington, D.C., but in our media, churches, schools, civic organizations, youth groups, and universities. Western civilization, as we have known it, and America, as we have known it, are losing. Much of the time, the losses come about by default. Few people seem willing to take a principled stand against the onslaught. Most Americans retreat before a shot is fired. They think, evidently, that they can escape—and they can, for a time—having to deal with the changes wrought by the globalists, the social engineers, the postmodernists, the deconstructionists, and the socialists. But that escape is, at best, a dereliction of duty, and, at worst, cowardice in the face of the enemy. The enemy, meanwhile, is emboldened, gains momentum, acquires fresh troops and new bases of supply, and launches new offensives.

The battleground where people are least likely to dig in and fight is the university. The liberal professor of the 50's and 60's has given way to the authoritarian, cultural Marxist professor of the 80's and 90's. Few conservatives can be found, and they are generally notable only for their silence. Most university departments were cleansed of conservatives long ago. More recently, a drive was launched to cleanse the departments of liberals, many of whom dare to cling to old bourgeois standards of objective inquiry and scientific methodology. The most vehement criticisms of faculty by other faculty that I saw during some 15 years of teaching at UCLA were not of conservatives by liberals but of liberals by cultural Marxists. Those liberal professors who did not morph into politically correct professors were excoriated. Their lives were made miserable, and they eventually accepted early retirement or left for another university.

One professor who left in the early 90's was one of the most dynamic lecturers and finest scholars on campus. After teaching for some 25 years at UCLA, he is now at a major New England university. His troubles began when he objected to a demand for relaxed standards in the doctoral program in history. Simply stated, too many of the pet students of the politically correct professors were failing the written exams for the Ph.D. The exams were ultimately dumbed down. I thought the relaxation of standards outrageous until I learned that, during the last two decades, several universities had abandoned the written exams altogether.

The same professor got more grief when he wrote an article arguing against the establishment of a Chicano Studies department on campus. He correctly noted that the courses demanded by Chicano activists were already being taught by several departments and that the effort to establish a new department was more about money and power than scholarship. Responses to his argument included name-calling and threats. Perhaps it is *de rigueur* on campuses, but, nonetheless, it is ironic that the professor, a Jewish boy from New York, was called a "Nazi."

An even bigger ruckus occurred, however, when the professor wrote an article questioning the wisdom of having several professors whose specialty was some aspect of "women's history" when the department had few or no professors whose specialties were constitutional, diplomatic, or military history, Jacksonian America, or Civil War and Reconstruction. After seeing the article on the history department's bulletin board, one female professor screamed, slammed doors, and tore down the article. She was only one of several who helped to make the professor's days at UCLA ever more unpleasant. When he finally left for greener pastures, UCLA lost one of its most nationally prominent and

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distinguished scholars.

While an undergraduate, I heard a good deal about freedom of speech and academic freedom. When I was just beginning my graduate work, UCLA hired Angela Davis as a professor. She did not have a Ph.D., major publications, or significant teaching experience. No matter: She was black, female, and Marxist. Her hiring created quite a stir off campus. It seems almost quaint today—howls of protest over the hiring of an unqualified radical—so conditioned have we become to accept such practices without the slightest dissent. Back then, more than 30 years ago, several regents of the University of California and a good number of politicians voiced objections. The UCLA faculty, for the most part, defended her appointment. *It is simply a matter of freedom of speech and academic freedom,* cried her faculty supporters. I discussed the issue with several of those professors. They all swore they were defending her not because she was black, female, and Marxist. Oh, no! They were defending the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom. The university is the free marketplace of ideas!

Not too long after the furor over Angela Davis, the UCLA faculty voted to ban William Shockley from speaking on campus. Shockley was merely a distinguished professor of physics at Stanford, the inventor of the transistor, a Nobel laureate, and the reason there is a Silicon Valley today. His scientific genius had revolutionized the 20th-century world. However, he had made the mistake of noting that the average black scores 15 or more points lower on IQ tests than the average white. This is simply a matter of record, but it was not to be mentioned. Moreover, Shockley argued that the great disparity in IQs was not the result of environment but a consequence of genetic inheritance, like eye color. Shockley also identified an ominous trend in America: Those at the lower end of the IQ scale, be they black or white, were having the most children, while those at the upper end were having the fewest. How many generations before America was dumbed down? While all of this should have made for a provocative speech and stimulating discussion, it was not to be.

I asked the same professors who had defended Angela Davis why they had voted to ban William Shockley from speaking on campus. "He's racist," came the reply.

"So what?" I asked. "I thought it was the principle of freedom of speech and academic freedom you were defending." I discovered that some facts are not to be mentioned, and some ideas, not discussed on campus—the putative bastion of free speech and free inquiry. Years later, when teaching my own classes at UCLA, I discovered that simply giving a factual narrative of U.S. history can create controversy.

Looking back, it is easy to see the transformation that academe was undergoing during the 1970's and 80's. At the time, though, what is now identified as "cultural Marxism" or "political correctness" was not so well understood. One day in the mid-80's, I had an epiphany: Political correctness is a religion—a secular religion. There can be no dissent, no difference of opinion. Heretics are burned or banished, executed or exiled. Until my moment of enlightenment, I had difficulty understanding why some professors went into a rage when anyone disagreed with them. (I relish a good debate.) I had not yet realized that the politically correct simply could not accept a difference of opinion. Once I understood that they were religious zealots, I realized how naive and foolish I had been. Debate or even reasoned discussion was not an option.

This is why so many history departments have been cleansed of the politically *incorrect*. There is no diversity—of the intellectual and political variety—in these departments. The history department at the University of Colorado, located in a state where registered Republicans outnumber registered Democrats, is a good example. According to a study published a few years ago by the *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 members of the department were registered voters. Twenty-seven of those were Democrats, and one was Republican. That was something of a victory since there were no registered Republicans in the English, psychology, philosophy, or journalism departments. In the university's 13 liberal-arts departments, there were 190 professors—and 184 were Democrats. The University of Colorado is not atypical. Similar statistics were found at Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford—in fact, at nearly every university subjected to scrutiny.

The cleansing begins whenever the cultural Marxists gain control of the various committees in the department. Often, their actions are subtle and, as a consequence, more insidious. The politically correct zealots might find that their more moderate or conservative colleagues have large enrollments in their classes, excellent student evaluations, and a solid list of publications. Unable to attack such professors directly, the zealots instead concentrate on controlling the hiring of new faculty or revising the course description in the college catalogue. A professor cannot be told what to say in his classroom, but he is required to teach a course according to its description in the catalogue.

For example, the politically correct find a professor teaching the American West in the Turnerian tradition—the westward march of American pioneers across the continent, carving a civilization out of the wilderness and establishing democratic institutions—particularly odious. However, by every measure, the professor is highly rated. What to do? Change the catalogue course description. The course now becomes a study of issues concerning the interaction of different races and cultures, genocidal wars, American imperialism, the oppression of women and people of color, and environmental devastation.

The professor must now restructure his entire course to fit a politically correct agenda and ignore or treat with a jaundiced eye the Boones, Crocketts, and Jacksons crossing the Appalachians; the buckskin-clad mountain men planting their traps in the beaver streams of the Rockies and Far West; gold-fevered prospectors exploring every nook and cranny from California to Colorado and from Mexico to Alaska; pioneers struggling across deserts and mountains to the Pacific Coast; cattle barons grazing their beeves on the High Plains and declaring themselves masters of all they survey; the Pony Express racing through mountain blizzards, scorching deserts, and hostile Indians; teamsters cursing their way over the Santa Fe Trail; construction crews laying gleaming rails across the continent; gunfighters dueling in the streets of boom towns; highwaymen calling out to stagecoach drivers, "Throw down the box!"; and the 7th Cavalry riding out to battle with the regimental band playing "Garry Owen." All such topics would have to be ignored or discussed only in relation to a politically correct agenda.

That, of course, is the point. The cultural Marxists believe there should be no time to discuss such Americans and such events for their own sake. Those frontiersmen and those epic events are too romantic, too heroic, too inspiring. It is now the duty of the university to teach students to hate America and to teach white males to hate themselves. Meanwhile, we Americans are financing these perversions with our tax dollars and our

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donations. We are financing our own destruction.

Committees controlled by the politically correct also determine which graduate students get stipends or assignments as teaching assistants. Any openly conservative or libertarian student had better have a job off campus. During my years at UCLA, such students were rare. Most graduate students in the liberal arts were well to the left of center, and some were already politically correct zealots. I really had my eyes opened in 1987. One week into a new quarter, I was called upon to replace an ill professor and teach a lower-division U.S. history survey course in addition to the upper-division American West and California history classes that I normally taught. Six teaching assistants (T.A.'s) had been assigned to the class, which had an enrollment of some 300 students. I knew none of the T.A.'s; one of the six was female. After my initial meeting with the teaching assistants, the female T.A.—I shall call her "Sheri"—said to another T.A., "I'll have the prof in bed before the end of the quarter."

Standard operating procedure for lower-division survey courses calls for the professor to lecture to the entire class two or three times weekly in a large lecture hall and for individual T.A.'s to meet with smaller groups of students once a week in "sections." Problems began within a few weeks. One of the T.A.'s—I shall call him "Don"—confided in me that three of the T.A.'s were attempting to convince the others to file a complaint against me over my lectures. I expressed surprise because they had not said anything to me—and I had always encouraged discussion. "They don't work that way," replied Don. "They're all members of the RCP." The reference left me nonplussed. "What's the RCP?" I asked. Don looked at me incredulously and, then, realizing that I was not kidding, said, "The Revolutionary Communist Party." That explained what "RCP" stood for, but I was still at a loss concerning the organization. "It's the Maoist branch of the communists," declared Don, looking at me as if I had just fallen off the turnip truck.

My purportedly RCP teaching assistants did everything they could to undermine my lectures in their sections. They had one major problem, though—the facts. They were unable to challenge anything I said. In one of their conspiratorial meetings with the other T.A.'s, Don asked them if they could refute any of my facts. They grew frustrated, and, finally, one of them screamed, "There are some facts students just shouldn't know." Facts do have a rather inconvenient way of interfering with the imposition of Marxist models upon history. The screaming T.A. was Sheri. By now, she was convinced that I was a fascist pig. Nonetheless, she still had a strange attraction for me.

As teaching evaluations clearly demonstrated, most of the students greatly enjoyed my lectures. Several students even noted that they were a refreshing change from the leftist propaganda of their other courses. There were a small number of politically correct zealots, however, whom I upset, angered, outraged. They finally resorted to bringing members of campus activist groups into class to monitor my lectures. This was especially fun—just the time to discuss black slave masters and the thousands of black slaves they owned, or the thousands of Irish immigrants who died doing jobs considered too dangerous for slaves, or the thousands of black slaves owned by the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw.

I tried to leave the politically correct activists dispirited and broken after each lecture. I was told that they had teams of students and professors checking my facts, thinking they would be able to contradict my statements. All of this led to the infamous statement, "There are some facts students just shouldn't know."

By the time I got to World War II, the activists were nearly hysterical. The politically correct proclaim that Japan was forced to go to war against the racist and imperialistic United States to defend her "unique culture." I took my students back to the Japanese sneak attack on Port Arthur and the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese annexation of Korea, the Japanese participation in World War I to gain islands in the Pacific, the fortification of those islands against the League of Nations mandate, the invasion of Manchuria and the creation of the puppet state of Manchoukuo, the bombing of the *Panay*, the Rape of Nanking. I described the Japanese atrocities in China in gruesome detail. At the end of the lecture, a Chinese girl came up to me in tears and said, "Thank you, thank you, Professor McGrath. In all my years in school no one has ever dared to tell the story of Nanking." (How different from when I grew up, when the Rape of Nanking and the Bataan Death March were part of everyone's vocabulary.)

For purposes of evaluating teaching assistants, a professor is required to attend each of his T.A.'s' sections at least once. While at one of the sections, I listened to a student ask the T.A. why we dropped the bomb on Japan and not on Germany. Without blinking, the T.A. immediately responded, "Another example of racist America." Later, in a private conference with the T.A., I asked if he might want to rethink his response. He stared blankly at me. The following dialogue then took place.

McGrath: "When did Germany surrender?"
T.A.: "I don't know exactly."
McGrath: "7 May 1945."
T.A.: "Oh."
McGrath: "Do you know when we first test-exploded the bomb?"
T.A.: "Not exactly."
McGrath: "16 July 1945."
T.A.: "Oh."

The T.A. looked at me nonplussed. I was stunned. He either did not realize the incredible mistake he had made when responding to the student's question, or he did not care. I explained to him that the bomb was not ready for actual use until more than two weeks after the first test explosion. Should we then have dropped it on Germany, I asked, three months after she had surrendered unconditionally? Again, no reaction. Wouldn't most of us be horribly embarrassed by such an ignorant error? I further noted that the Manhattan Project was about producing a bomb for use against Germany, not Japan, and that we killed far more German civilians in the firebombings of German cities than we did in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It meant nothing to him.

This T.A. may very well be in a history department at a university today, lecturing to a new generation of students. Universities are turning out hundreds like him, believers in the secular religion of political correctness, facts be damned—if they are known. But, then, according to deconstructionists and deconstructionism, there are no facts. Facts are nothing more than artificial constructs of a particular culture, perspective, language, and consciousness. Please tell me that the deconstructionists dropped too much acid in the late 60's, and their synapses have misfired ever since. In the meantime, I will stick to the facts. ·c

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Education, Schooling, Learning

To Hell With Communications

by John Lukacs

Anatol Woolf

I do not like the word *education*—especially when it is not only confused with but mistaken for *learning*. Originally, education in English meant "bringing up." That is not identical with *schooling*. A man or woman who "has been well brought up" (alas, an almost obsolete phrase nowadays) suggests something about good manners, mental or physical manners, and little or nothing about his or her academic education. Also, *education* may mean something that is definite or complete, whereas *learning* is both broader and less definite, at least faintly suggesting a process that might be still going on. We can recognize and speak about an "educational bureaucracy," while a *learning bureaucracy* would make no sense at all. There were *scholiasts* centuries ago, and *scholars* even now, but *educationists* are only a relatively recent, and very American, phenomenon.

I cannot say much about education at present, for the main reason that I retired (more precisely: I was forced to retire) from college teaching now more than six years ago. But I have taught in American colleges (and here and there, also elsewhere) for exactly 50 years, half of a century. My memories may be like slices of Swiss cheese, but, apart from the holes, there may still be enough of them to construct a fondue, in a cook's tour of retrospect.

Pliny the Younger wrote: "I love to renew a pleasure by relating it." Sometimes (fortunately, not always) the same goes for displeasure. Unlike many refugees from Central Europe, I will not take pleasure (or, more exactly, display vanity) by asserting the superior nature of my schooling in Hungary. There, as almost everywhere in continental Europe, the remarkably high standards were those of the humanistic middle or high schools. I think that at least two Nobel Prize winners issued from my school. The marks, however, which that Gymnasium left on my mind are, at best, mixed, with the bad more numerous than the good. Yes, we had at least six years of rigorous and literary Latin; a few excellent teachers, especially in the humanities; high standards in letters and mathematics; a basic preparation for university studies. At the same time, the rigidity of the largely German-modeled academic discipline amounted to nothing—and I mean *nothing*—for the nurturing of character. Cheating was not only universal, it was a must. Our teachers were our enemies, though there were a few honorable exceptions. Others were actually contemptible. Except for enforced calisthenics, there were no athletic sports or facilities. The overwhelming, ubiquitous, enforced ideology was that of a nationalism that was rigid as well as shallow—a bad combination. The results speak for themselves. There was hardly any correlation between a student's scholastic record and his character. Many of the best students turned out to be conformists or opportunists of the worst sort. Others did not. That, however, may not be a particularly Central European syndrome.

The universities were quite different. But the proper comparison, not only now but as late as half a century ago, was that between the European high or middle school and the American college, since the curriculum of the latter had at least a few similarities with the requirements of the junior and senior class-

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es of the European middle schools. Because of many things, including the cafeteria curricula of American colleges, even this is no longer a basis for comparison.

I fled Hungary in 1946 because of its rapidly advancing communization; but I cannot imagine myself as a high-school or university teacher there, whether under communism or not. In the United States, I became a teacher, because here I wanted to be one. But before I write anything about my teaching experiences of half a century, I must briefly mention an Hungarian element in them: the popularity and the success of many European teachers in American colleges. (Whether this is still so, I cannot tell. It even included European refugees with questionable academic qualifications, with some touches of charlatanry here or there.) This was the result of a confluence from two sides. On one hand, there was the relative sophistication, the worldly knowledge (though not necessarily wisdom) of refugee professors, wider (though not necessarily more profound) than that of their American colleagues. On the other, there was the reciprocal appreciation of their personalities and of their mode of discourse by their American students.

Fifty years ago, most American students entering college knew how to read and write. I am not saying that they knew how to read and write *well*, only that they were equipped with the rudiments of reading and writing. (In a Catholic college, a student's writing instantly showed whether he had come from a Catholic high school: If so, his cursive penmanship was handsome and perfectly legible.) Whatever students had read was painfully limited; but their imagination, feeble as it was, remained largely verbal, not yet overwhelmed by movies and television, though the presence and influence of the latter already existed. It was my custom to present lists of books to my students, at times requiring the reading of seven or eight books for a course each semester. (After about 1970, I felt compelled to reduce this requirement to four or five.) Those former students of mine who please (and surprise) me with their gratitude for my teaching just about always express their appreciation for what I had made them read. But this practice has now, by and large, disappeared. Students' knowledge of movies and of television productions has become immensely wide; their acquaintance with books exists hardly at all.

Fifty years ago, most American students entering college were first-generation collegians, grateful for their new status—a leg up in an already increasingly classless American society. The minority of students from families where at least one parent had a college education are more difficult to generalize about: At least a portion of this group had some experience with intellectual people—a class that has, by now, just about disappeared. *Intellectual*, as a noun designating certain people, appeared in the United States some time before 1900; by the end of the 20th century, it no longer existed. *Intellectual* designated a class of opinions even more than a class of society or of education; also, until about the mid-1950's, nearly all intellectuals were liberals. There was, and remains, much to be critical of them. (I bristled at being called An Intellectual; I kept saying that I was A Teacher and A Writer.) However—no matter how faintly—I regret their disappearance now, since we have reached a stage of devolution where there are just about no intellectuals who are not academics (and when there are many academics whose intellectual interests beyond their professional occupation is nonexistent).

What kind of knowledge did I bring from Hungary to America 56 years ago? Many valuable matters from that famous Gymnasium and from the university. None of that compares, however, with the mental (and aesthetic, and artistic, and moral) atmosphere of the home, of the family. This is not the place to list or even to sum up these advantages, including private tutors of languages and of music and, perhaps especially, my father's impressive library. There were so many other, sometimes even ineffable, matters. The relationship between one's home and his respect for learning existed in America as well, though evidently lessening during recent decades. Of course, there were many exceptions: students reacting against the non-intellectuality of their families—not always in salutary ways, but that is not the point. The point is not mere intellectuality. Last year, I read that, among 45 high-school students in a middle-class suburb in New Jersey, only three were having dinner more or less regularly with their parents, sitting at a table with them at night. That we have a juvenile "culture" (or worse, a juvenile *civilization*, where most pictorial and musical entertainment is produced for teenaged audiences, is both a cause and a result of such a deplorable condition.

The abdication of parents, the easy (and no matter how costly—but, of course, Americans are the least materialist people of the world) translation of their educational responsibilities to schools is not, however, a new story. American schools have been, for long, designed and expected to teach—more: to inculcate—manners and morals, civics and sports. This includes sexual manners and morals: To marry your high-school sweetheart was as American as apple pie a good three generations ago. I suspect that the rate of divorce among those immature high-school sweethearts may be even higher than among those Americans who married later, but that is not the point. The point is that, while 50 years ago high school and college, no matter how illusorily, were meant to furnish a preparation for a good life, what parents nowadays expect—and most of these parents are college graduates themselves—is that their offspring will get a degree of something that will instantly qualify them for a particular job.

A Communication Revolution? Yes and no; or rather, evidently no. I have now lived in the same place—state, county, township, road, school district—for 48 years. I have been a member of the township government for 33 of them. Few of my books are to be found in the local borough or county library, but that, again, is hardly relevant. More relevant is the fact that I have not yet met a single administrator or teacher from the area high school, which is less than one mile from my house. (I guess the fault is on both sides, theirs as well as mine. Never mind.) What I mind is the following experience: A few years ago, I volunteered to give a few talks about history or religion to the students in a local school, without compensation. I was told that I was both overqualified and not sufficiently well known.

Someone once said that a celebrity is someone who is famous for being well known. Ever since I read that quip, I have said that I want to be famous for *not* being well known. But that is a status I have yet to achieve; and, in any event, it has nothing to do with education, or schooling, or learning. It is all part and parcel of Communications. A friend of mine, a distinguished scholar of English and Irish literature, told me that, at the beginning of his teaching career, he was asked by the principal of a high school to help students perform a mock wedding. He was told, too, near the end of his long teaching career, that his department would no longer exist. Instead of a Department of English, there was to be one of Communications. c

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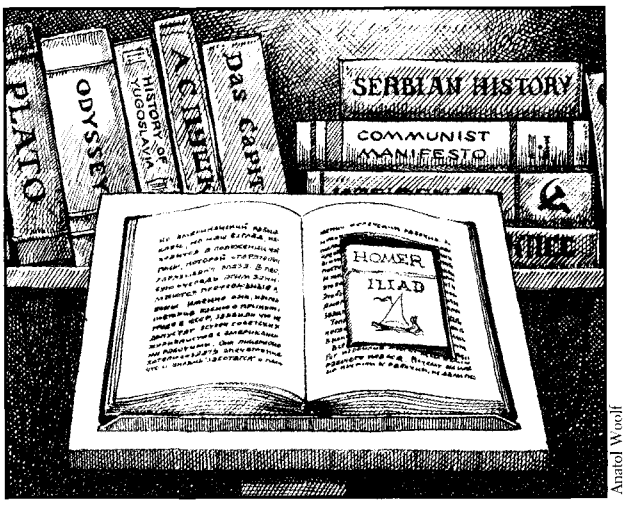
A "Communist" Education Remembered

Identifying the Totalitarians

by Srdja Trifkovic



Anatol Wooff

Belgrade's Tenth Gymnasium was a well-proportioned neoclassical building in a leafy park three miles from the city center. Built by King Alexander shortly before his ill-fated trip to Marseilles, it bore his name until the Partisans' victory in 1945 and was considered a very good secondary school. Many of its students came from the provinces on state-assisted scholarships, and its diploma—obtained after a grueling final exam known as the *Matura* (equivalent to Germany's *Abitur* or France's *Baccalaureat*)—practically guaranteed the graduate's entry into university.

Before World War II, it was not uncommon for university professors, especially in the junior ranks (assistants and "*dozents*"), to supplement their usually meager incomes with grammar-school contract-teaching positions. After the war, for many who did not join the Communist Party, this was the only professional option left, as insistence on Party membership was not nearly as strong in secondary education as it was in the academy. In the 60's and 70's, by the time they were nearing retirement, some of these people were not only mature educators but first-class intellectuals who derived real pleasure from nurturing in their more talented charges the sense of beauty, truth, and goodness that was independent of, and even at odds with, the official ideology.

By the time I attended the Tenth Gymnasium, a quarter of a century of communist neglect was everywhere in evidence. Ornate mosaic tiles in the corridors, when lost or damaged, were replaced by plain white ones or simply patched up with cement. The intricate plasterwork on the 18-foot classroom ceilings was cracking, oak parquets were darkened beyond recognition, and massive cast-iron radiators hissed angrily under the pressure needed to keep us warm on wintry mornings. The burgeoning ranks of baby boomers required two shifts, from 8:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. for about 300 freshmen and sophomores and from 2:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. for almost as many juniors and seniors, with six 45-minute classes divided by four short breaks and one long intermission. The student-to-teacher ratio was high, nearing 30 to one, and high-tech gadgetry was limited to one 35-mm. film projector, one stereo turntable, and one slide projector—for the entire school.

It was, nevertheless, a good school; by the standards of public education in the United States today, it was superb. Many of its old-fashioned teachers (then called "professors") believed that their role was to teach, not to interact. They used the polite *vous* form when addressing people half a century their junior but had no qualms about telling a wanting student—and his parents—that he was unfit for the Gymnasium and should transfer to a vocational school instead. They considered the Gymnasium education a privilege to be earned—and, in my time, it was a privilege enjoyed by no more than one fifth of all primary-school graduates. The grading system was unabashedly quantitative and meritocratic, from "1" for "F" to "5" for "A," and it generally made no allowances for social rank or parents' clout. (Race, sex, and sexual preference were not issues.) Even when the professors had to present certain topics with the official ideological spin, they managed to do so with an implied bad grace without letting the cat out of the bag altogether.

The core curriculum was the same all over the country. Language and literature, mathematics, Latin, history, geography, philosophy, visual arts, music, one or two foreign languages, and sports were present in all four years. Psychology, sociology, applied technology, physics, chemistry, and a few other "elective" subjects were included for a year or two. Final examinations were distributed to the schools in sealed envelopes on the day of the examination. In order to graduate, students had to

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pass written and oral examinations in Serbian, mathematics, one humanities and one natural-science subject, and one foreign language. In addition, they had to write a final thesis and defend it before a commission. My own, "The Collapse of the Third Reich," had 50 single-spaced typed pages and relied on some two-dozen published secondary sources.

In contrast to the United States, which awards high-school diplomas on the basis of (presumably) successful completion of a prescribed number of courses whose content and standards differ from state to state, we had a clearly articulated relationship between the curricula and the examinations required to gain entrance to the university—a link between what is taught and what is tested. The heavy workload meant several hours of serious study every day. At the end of it all, the *Maturant* was, by design, a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. He had a solid grounding in most areas once considered necessary for an educated, civilized person, and the assumption was that excellence would be attained in his chosen field of university study.

In practical terms, this meant that we all had some idea of what Leonidas did at Thermopylae and what Caesar said at the Rubicon; what the *Protagoras* was and who Pythagoras was; who was Atilla and who was Totila; what was natural law and what was the second law of thermodynamics. We memorized segments from Njegos and Serbian medieval epic poetry, as well as a couple of Shakespeare's sonnets and parts of Pushkin's *Onegin*, albeit in translation. Attendance at the symphony orchestra, ballet, and opera matinees every first Sunday of the month was not obligatory, but it was necessary for a good grade in music; and what started as a chore soon became a habit for at least some. Latin was, on the whole, easy, and making puns (I prided myself on rephrasing Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* by removing the *g* from *cogito*) was deemed only slightly pretentious. Admittedly, the curricular absorption was achieved at the expense of what the English would call "character education," but the same shortcoming applied to all Central Europeans—and, by that time, the concept of "character" had gone out of fashion in England itself, with some vestiges preserved in a few elite public schools.

Some areas of our curriculum were burdened by the Titoist brand of Marxism—notably sociology, 20th-century history, and modern philosophy—but the stamp was not deeply pressed in most subjects. Once in a while, we had to parrot the lies about the "people's liberation struggle" of 1941-45 and explain the superiority of "workers' self-management" to make the grade, but, for the most part, we had a curriculum essentially similar to the Gymnasia of Austria-Hungary that had provided the model for the Kingdom of Serbia in the 1880's and have remained in force ever since. Under this system, an ever-present principle, mostly implied and only rarely explicitly spelled out, was that moral and aesthetic norms are not a matter of personal choice. There were "standards," and we were supposed to conform to them and to accept the lasting norms that antedated and transcended the rules of the current regime. At home, and with friends, however, we were free.

I have often wondered if the communists allowed old-style schools to survive by design or by default, and, on balance, I give more weight to the former. For many middle-ranking apparatchiks, good schools were necessary: They wanted their own children to be "properly educated," and, secretly knowing the limits of their abilities, they were loath to experiment with the school system the way they had experimented—with catastrophic effect—with the economy and society. They wanted their children to assume the positions of leadership that they had come to regard as rightfully theirs, and—being largely half-educated peasants—they had enough common sense to find the answer. They intuitively understood that the only way to forge a New Class from their offspring was to combine the usurped privilege of power with the inherited privilege of good education that develops the mind and enhances character.

In addition, many of the communist ruling class had an eminently *arriviste* reverence for *Kultur*, even when they did not understand or consume it. They courted artists and always preferred to woo them rather than persecute them. *Kultur* was to be brought to the People, at least in theory, but it was *not* to be mutilated or destroyed to fit the alleged needs of *hoi polloi*. The tamed revolutionaries filled their homes with the leather-bound classics, buttoned their shirts, and learned to tie ties. By the mid-1950's, after an initial period of stifling socialist-realist lunacy, Belgrade had a lively artistic and literary life. It was always closely monitored by the Party but never successfully guided. Something similar happened in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland: Good schools produced good minds, and no Kadar, Novotny, or Gomulka could expect to control people who were starting to live a life of learning new things.

My own high-school days came at the tail end of a long period of uneasy coexistence between Us and Them, society and the "comrades." The schools produced young people singularly capable of thinking for themselves, able to read between the lines of the official media while remaining unintimidated by "the West" to which they were increasingly exposed. School trips to Eastern Bloc nations, including Russia, revealed that, even behind the deepest Iron Curtain, the canon of traditional culture was alive and well. Whatever spin their professors dutifully put on Fyodor Mikhailovich, those children knew what *The Possessed* was all about. By the deaths of Tito and Brezhnev, it seemed that a long-overdue change was ahead, but we soon discovered that "the West" hated what we were more than it hated communism. When we took our *Matura* exams, we had our dreams, and we were smarting for action; three decades later, we are mostly dispersed over three continents, which is a generational defeat, but we did well in the conventional sense, which is a credit to our long-dead teachers.

The destructive reforms of Yugoslav education came in the late 1970's and early 80's, inspired more by the fashionable Western notions of egalitarianism and visceral hatred of excellence than by the old Marxist orthodoxy. Tito's education guru, a Croat sociologist named Stipe Suvar, declared that the Gymnasium was an elitist institution incapable of responding to the demands for greater equality of educational opportunity and the growing need for vocationally qualified personnel. The Gymnasium was to become a mass institution—and, thus, was abolished.

After a catastrophic decade of experimentation, Slobodan Milosevic reinstated the Gymnasium in the early 1990's, but its future is more uncertain than ever under his "pro-Western" successors. Serbia's current education minister Gaso Knezevic, a disciple of every fashionable theory of the past 20 years, is a personal friend of George Soros and accepts money and instructors from his Open Society Foundation and other NGOs. Within months of coming to power in October 2000, the "reformists" within Serbia and their foreign sponsors insisted that schools—all schools, from kindergarten to the universities—must be reformed and turned from "authoritarian" institutions into

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schools for the "unhindered expression of students' personalities in the process of equal-footed interaction with the teaching staff, thus overcoming the obsolete concept of authority and discipline rooted in the oppressive legacy of patriarchal past." They started with the primary schools, with a pilot program of "educational workshops" for seven- to twelve-year-olds. The accompanying manual, sponsored by UNICEF and financed by the Open Society, denigrates the "obsolete" view that the purpose of education is the acquisition of knowledge and insists that the teacher has to become the class "designer" and that his relationship with students should be based on "partnership."

Accordingly, Soros' foundation is financing a pilot program of experimental elementary schools, 14 in Serbia and six in Montenegro, that follow his "Step-by-Step" methodology. English-language instruction is based on a 1996 textbook called *I Spy*, in which thousands of little Serbs (and presumably other beneficiaries of Mr. Soros' largesse) follow the exploits of a family of ogres: Frankenstein's monster, a ghost, a vampire, a werewolf ("My name is Wolfie"), and a witch. They are made to look funny and harmless, but they come out of coffins in moonlit graveyards to go to school. Far from investing time and effort to get her homework done, the little witch uses black magic: "ABC, 123, magic pen, draw for me!" "My favorite color is black," she says on the accompanying tape in a coarse, sinister voice, and the child has to repeat the sentence in the same tone of voice. (From that moment on, that sentence will figure in the child's head whenever she is faced with blackness.) In Lesson 20, students are taught about stars and astrology and have to learn the signs of the Zodiac in English. The monsters' family meals consist of stewed beetles, with a human skeleton on the mantelpiece and a small coffin as the gift to the hosts. Their Christmas present is a ticking bomb, and, for Easter they give eggs with a live prehistoric reptile inside. In the process of learning English, the children are expected to identify with one of these characters. Numbers are represented with groups of skulls, frogs, rats, spiders, and bats. In short, what is evil, dark, satanic, bizarre, and disgusting is presented as cute, and direct self-identification is not only encouraged, but demanded.

The reformers devote particular attention to the more active role of schools in countering the allegedly unhealthy influence of the family, which "still carries an imprint of nationalist, sexist, racist, and homophobic prejudices rampant in the society at large." The time-honored Balkan tradition of spanking children when they disobey is now presented in the elementary classroom as a form of abuse that, while not yet criminalized, should be reported. Traditional sex roles are relativized by "special projects" that entail cross-dressing and temporary adoption of opposite sex names. The new curriculum is consciously designed to root out "nationalism," so epic poetry is out, and in neighboring Bosnia, Njegos and Ivo Andric have already been banned by the international administrators in favor of courses on "human rights" and "tolerance."

What these people want is to make young Serbs, and children in other postcommunist countries, give up real learning and forget the meaning of obedience and of shame. They want them to stop reading books—real books, anyway. This is evil and tantamount to making them less than fully human. The experiment has been tried in America, as well, and it has worked so far: If America is defined by the character of its current political, business and media elites, it may well be beyond redemption.

Swarming With Heisenberg's Bees

Constance Rowell Mastores

The bees I heard but could not see
made no particular sense to me.
I thought the buzz man-made
and mechanically predictable—

until I stepped into their midst,
found nothing fixed, and let
momentum have its casual way
with me. How they whirled and purled

as they flew in flux in a wanderlust
toward positions of possibility!
Then someone shouted: *Look at*
all them bees! And we collapsed,

without much fuss, into an observed
and perfect singularity.

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Plutomania

by Samuel Francis

"In these days a great capitalist has deeper roots than a sovereign prince, unless he is very legitimate."

—Benjamin Disraeli

Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich
by Kevin Phillips
New York: Broadway Books;
474 pp., $29.95

◆

Appearing just in time for the Enron and WorldCom scandals and the ensuing stock-market plunge, Kevin Phillips' harsh new scrutiny of the trends toward the concentration of wealth and power in the emerging American social and economic order has been greeted with glee in quarters where Phillips, the onetime advisor to Richard Nixon and prophet of the Republican Majority, has seldom been welcome. The reviewer in the leftish *New York Review of Books* called Mr. Phillips "one of our most valuable political and economic thinkers," while the (rather more than leftish) *Nation* recently published an article by him recapitulating some of the major claims of the book. Conservatives have been somewhat more muted, having read Mr. Phillips out their ranks years ago when he failed to boom the new Golden Age of globalization, free trade, universal affluence, and the End of History that has now become the animating vision of the American mainstream right; if they have had anything to say about his latest work, I have managed to miss it, but their silence is hardly surprising. *Wealth and Democracy*, if it accomplishes nothing else, is certain to puncture a good deal of the utopianism that now parades as "conservatism," although it will leave the reader uncertain as to whether its author is merely a liberal advocate of economic redistribution or still retains some identity as a conservative.

Anatol Woolf

Mr. Phillips' thesis can perhaps best be summarized in some of his concluding sentences:

> As the twenty-first century gets underway, the imbalance of wealth and democracy in the United States is unsustainable, at least by traditional yardsticks. Market theology and unelected leadership have been displacing politics and elections. Either democracy must be renewed, with politics brought back to life, or wealth is likely to cement a new and less democratic regime—plutocracy by some other name.

Most of this book simply expands on and documents these sentences, and while "democracy" and Mr. Phillips' expressions of concern for its survival may be rhetorical concessions to contemporary fashion, most paleoconservatives should have little problem with what he is arguing: The economic trend in the United States today, aided by the political trend of the federal government, is toward the concentration of economic and political power in fewer and fewer hands, while the ideological trend is toward the apotheosis of Economic Man and what Phillips dubs "Market Utopianism," whether masked as the "free market" of the libertarians or the "global democratic capitalism" of the neoconservatives.

Mr. Phillips identifies three periods of what he calls "wealth realignment" in American history, periods in which new economic elites, always closely allied to government and the emerging political forces that controlled it, sprang into being. The first two, at the American Revolution and under the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian takeover from the Federalists, left the American South the economically and politically dominant section of the country. That domination ended with the Northern victory in the Civil War, which "not only expanded but massively re-aligned wealth-holding away from the slave-owning South to Northern financiers and industrialists." The third realignment of wealth and power occurred in the New Deal era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, in which newer kinds of businesses tended to support and profit from the Rooseveltian expansion of the state, especially during World War II.

> Business and financial support for Roosevelt's reelection in 1936 included new increments—in oil, agribusiness, finance, multinational corporations, and technology—that foreshadowed changes visible in the top wealth lists by the 1940s and 1950s.

By contrast, Mr. Phillips argues, the

Samuel Francis is Chronicles' *Washington editor.*

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Republican political realignment of the 1960's and afterward failed to create a new concentration of wealth in the Sunbelt but merely reflected, along with the Democratic administrations of Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter, a bipartisan, regionally based economic power. Mr. Phillips' periodization of these economic cycles thus mirrors the major political turning points in American history—the consolidation of the national union under the Constitution and the two-party system; the destruction of state and local autonomy and the birth of the federal leviathan state in the Civil War; and the bloodless though revolutionary transition in the New Deal and World War II away from the bourgeois capitalism of the post-Civil War era to the managerial state capitalism of the present age.

Had he also tried to correlate cultural, social, and intellectual changes with them, Mr. Phillips could have used these economic-political "realignments" as the basis of a general reinterpretation of American history, but, throughout the book, he remains focused on economic issues. He tries to distance himself from Charles Beard's view that "economics drove the great realignments of American political parties." "In some cases, yes, in others, no," he writes, "Yet even believers in the greater sway of factors like wars or regionalism, race, and religion must give economics great weight." And so he does, to the extent that the reader has to wonder if Mr. Phillips recognizes any factor aside from economic motivation and any value other than economic reward.

His preoccupation with economics becomes oppressive in his discussion of the possible political responses to the concentration of wealth that he sees—largely correctly—enveloping contemporary and future America. "Between 1979 and 1989 the portion of the nation's wealth held by the top 1 percent nearly doubled, skyrocketing from 22 percent to 39 percent, probably the most rapid escalation in U.S. history"—with the direct assistance of the Reagan and Bush administrations. The ratio of the compensation of corporate CEOs to hourly wages earned by production workers rose from a mere 93 times that of workers' compensation in 1988 to an incredible 419 in 1999.

> While the wages of ordinary workers barely kept up with inflation, the average compensation among the top executives of the larger corporations vaulted 481 percent between 1990 and 1998 to an average of $10.6 million. Corporate profits, by contrast, rose only 108 percent.

The concentration of vast wealth in a constantly shrinking but increasingly luxurious and powerful overclass is reflected in the social and ideological trends of the age as well. Fortified in gated communities, protected by special security services, their children safely deposited in private and only fashionably integrated schools and summer camps, the overclass sports an ethic of prodigality, opulence, and indifference to the vast remaining portions of the population that would have embarrassed Marie Antoinette. "The capsules for the eighties," writes Mr. Phillips,

> seem to be the birthday parties held by gauche wives for financiers like Saul Steinberg and John Gutfreund. The first, titled "An Evening of Seventeenth Century Old Masters in Celebration of Saul's Fiftieth Year," was held in a replica of a Flemish tavern with semiclad live models *en tableau vivant* as figures from Rubens and Van Dyck. Mrs. Gutfreund's transgression was to book two seats on the Concorde to fly the birthday cake to Paris, a mere bagatelle, one would think, next to some of the Texas savings and loans galas.

Like the birthday cake flapping the friendly skies to Paris, the overclass (which is merely the corporate managerial class and its auxiliaries) has itself become transnational in both its interests and its very composition. "By the late 1990s," Mr. Phillips writes,

> many of the *Fortune* 500 companies were one-third, one-half, or two-thirds tied to international sales, earnings, plants, and employees. Some managements hoped to no longer [*sic*] process or manufacture anything in the United States, but merely to import and distribute goods, much like the ill-fated Enron transformation from producing company to financial trader.

As for the transnationalization of the managerial class itself, "many U.S. firms were dependent on foreign nations, mostly Asian, to fill American-based jobs with skilled engineers and programmers unavailable in the U.S. labor pool"—whether such skills are really unavailable in the U.S. is another question; unemployed American software engineers do not think so—and "This reliance extended to the highest levels of management."

> Of the four or five hundred top U.S. Internet, telecom, chip, and networking firms, dozens had Chinese, Indian, or Asian-American chief executives, and Silicon Valley was home to large numbers of Indian, Chinese, and Taiwanese executives and engineers.

Moreover, if the concentration of wealth creates a new plutocracy, what Phillips calls "the rise of the unelected" points to the emergence of a new political oligarchy from which middle-class Americans are excluded.

> In addition to governance of trade and finance being globalized and moved into the hands of the unelected, another such transfer of power involved the escalating judicial and administrative determination of political and social issues once decided by popularly elected legislatures. Here again the United States, with its vivid displays of policy-making by judges, has set the example. Other nations followed suit in the nineties, particularly Europe and the European Union.

And the formation of political oligarchy is paralleled by the emergence of what he calls an "hereditary aristocracy" based on entrenched and inherited wealth insulated from market forces by "skilled financial and legal management."

> Elaborate trusts, well-staffed family offices, and professional financial management had combined into the U.S. equivalent of the entail and primogeniture that kept landed wealth intact and concentrated in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain.

Mr. Phillips repeatedly points out that middle-class Americans have managed to maintain anything resembling their traditional level of affluence only by having their wives work outside the home and forcing themselves to work longer hours or at second jobs; the problems he cor-

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rectly associates with the concentration of wealth and power, however, are economic only in the nature of the burdens he describes. The disengagement of the ruling class from the nation itself as well as its open hatred of the traditional culture and people of the nation may be rooted in economic and technological forces, but the angers and resentments our elites breed are not.

Mr. Phillips' discussion of "Middle American Radicalism," including a sympathetic but critical account of the three Buchanan campaigns of the 1990's, tends to omit or downplay any but economic issues. He does mention the erosion of national sovereignty through such agreements as NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, as well as free trade in general, but cultural, social, and racial energies that complement the economic deluge that Middle Americans are facing never seem to enter into his equations. Issues such as abortion, the social meaning of taxation, schools, immigration, affirmative action, crime, and social and moral decline are simply never mentioned at all as either sources of Middle American anger or motives for Middle American rebellion.

Indeed, Mr. Phillips offers little reason to expect much from any future manifestation of Middle American Radicalism—and he may be right. Both the bonds of ethnic community that helped form and unite Middle Americans in Northern urban concentrations and the manufacturing base that solidified them as an economic and political force are withering under the triumphant forces of enforced ethnic and racial diversity and globalization. Mr. Phillips cites the analysis of left-liberal theorists Joel Rogers and Ruy Teixeira, which identifies white working-class voters as a "forgotten majority" that constitutes some 55 percent of the electorate. Rogers and Teixeira see in these voters the base of a future "progressive" or left-populist coalition, though, as Mr. Phillips notes, such voters have "become frequent participants in the conservative coalition," and "Economics, however, could move them once again." It could, but so could other forces that Mr. Phillips ignores.

It is difficult to say whether Kevin Phillips remains or ever was a "conservative" in any sense, and certainly most of those who adhere to that label do not consider him one. (At a conference of gold-standard nuts some years ago, I heard one barely literate sage characterize Mr. Phillips as a "Marxist," though he is no more a Marxist than Charles Beard, whose economic determinism he seems to favor as a universal explanatory device.) It probably no longer matters, however, whether he (or anyone else) is on the right or left, conservative or liberal, since those terms themselves no longer mean very much. Behind all of Phillips' charts and statistics and sometimes far-fetched historical analogies with great powers of the past; behind all the rhetoric and verbal and ideological swordplay of the right *vs.* left "debate" lies one looming question that rises before Middle Americans today: Do you want to be the hammer of the new century or its anvil, the social and political force that shapes its course or the shapeless lump that more powerful forces will pound into whatever forms they please? Economic forces will, no doubt, help to settle the question, but others, seemingly undreamt of by Kevin Phillips, may be even more important in doing so. ©

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Diminishing Returns

by Jeremy Lott

Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond
by Robert H. Nelson
University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press; 378 pp., $35.00

◆

Most partisan recollections of the economic world that existed before Adam Smith conjure up words from "feudal" to "primitive" to "mercantilistic" to "Catholic"—a dark era ridden by "just price" theory, wanton poverty induced by ridiculous regulation and barriers to international trade, and the divine right of kings. Then (so the story goes), Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, turning the world on its head. His ideas were adopted by a group of enlightened British colonial rebels who created the world's first nearly *laissez faire* regime, affirming in its "founding document" every person's right to pursue happiness (*i.e.*, the right to become stinking rich) over and against any other ethical considerations. Tariffs fell everywhere, prosperity multiplied, peace reigned, and the lion lay down with the lamb and nuzzled it.

During the middle of the 20th century, Paul Samuelson, author of the widely used college textbook *Economics*, was regarded by many as *the* modern economist. Samuelson claimed to speak authoritatively for *all* of economics, and his vision was at least superficially different from Smith's. A few Neanderthals might wish to "turn the hour hand back toward *laissez faire*," wrote Samuelson in a spasm of chronological snobbery in the first (1948) edition of his book, but Smith's "mystical principle of the 'invisible hand' . . . [has] done almost as much harm as good in the past century and a half." Monopolistic railroads were allowed to soak poor farmers, oil prices were held unnaturally high, the concentration of wealth was heavily skewed toward the rich (one of the few things Samuelson is willing to label "evil"), and rampant stock speculation helped to launch the Great Depression. Better to ditch that old-time religion and adopt the new, centralized scientific methods and solutions. Otherwise, Samuelson warned, the Soviet Union, being the more scientific of the superpowers in its organizational approach to society, could overtake the still backward United States.

Robert Nelson makes a compelling case that Professor Samuelson actually believed this nonsense. Samuelson, like his mentor John Maynard Keynes, wasn't really a communist, Nelson writes in *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond*, but he did share some basic assumptions with Marx, and these assumptions were only rhetorically "scientific." In fact,

> [I]n terms of ultimate values, Keynesianism was only a modest variation on Marx—on the recent revelation of God's actual plan for the world, that the Christian Bible is apparently mistaken, that God actually works in history through economic forces and is planning a glorious ending to the world based on the workings of rapidly advancing material productivity.

Both ideologies, that is, in a reading strikingly similar to the visions of apocalyptic prophets of the Old Testament, looked to economic tumult and the eventual resulting material progress as the engine of history that would usher in a sort of Heaven-on-Earth. Both, in that sense, were economically deterministic. Samuelson even went so far as to say that the most useful thing he could know about a man was not his religion nor his upbringing but his checkbook balance. Once material demands were satisfied, however, mankind would be free to pursue . . . let us just call it "bliss."

Thus Samuelson, initially at least, disagreed with Marx over the means to the end, not the end itself: overcoming the problems of self-interest to create a materialistic Utopia. The difference, of course, is that Samuelson and his ilk thought the market mechanism a valuable tool in reaching this goal through increasing "efficiency." Markets, however, could only "help" to bring this about—and only if guided by a very visible hand. First, at the advice of entirely dispassionate economists, governments had to tinker with such things as interest rates and money supplies and vigorously enforce anti trust laws to break monopolies. Second, "market failures" occurred, which the government had to fix by providing such things as primary education and unemployment insurance. Third, personal income needed to be redistributed from the rich to the poor through entitlements and a steeply progressive income tax.

Nelson likens this neoclassical school of economics to Roman Catholicism, assuming as it did an abundance of faith in an overriding authoritative institution that would do right by the people. Samuelson and company were the "priests" of the new order, trustworthy to navigate disinterestedly the choppy waters of public opinion. As with the Catholic Church, Nelson says, such unsubstantiated "heroic assumptions" were simply begging for reformation.

Well, they got it, courtesy of the renegade economists of the University of Chicago. Frank Knight, Milton Friedman, George Stigler, Ronald Coase, and others argued relentlessly that the government interveners were just as self-interested as anybody else and that they were, in fact, quite likely to impede, not increase, efficiency. Democratic governments (as the leaders of what would come to be known as the "public-choice school" pointed out) are often held hostage by various interest groups. These economists replaced the static picture Samuelson had drawn of the market mechanism—Nelson calls it "mathematical poetry"—with a more dynamic model, firmly locating rational self-interest at the center of their analysis.

Elevating self-interest to the *sine qua non* of economic analysis was nothing new. In perhaps the most quoted passage of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith wrote, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest." In practice, however, there had always been limits, set by the preferences or squeamishness of the reigning economic "priesthood."

As the Protestants had learned, reformations tend to take on a life and logic of their own. Second- and third-generation Chicago scholars such as Gary Becker and Judge Richard Posner have carried their analyses to new heights—or ridiculous extremes, depending on your point of view. These men have scrutinized everything, from consumption patterns to religious devotion to marriage, with the intent of divining what was in them for rational human agents. Even charity had to be explained in terms of self-interest: Mother Teresa, apparently, derived some measurable benefit from helping the poor expire in peace.

While the Chicago School took issue with what they viewed as a lack of rigor

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on the part of their more squeamish peers, Nelson argues persuasively that all of them (with the exception of Knight) bought into the same basic methodology and progressive economic goals. Though Friedman, for instance, dogmatically endorsed freedom for its own sake, all of his arguments turned not on moral principles but on mathematical demonstrations of the economic benefits to be had by loosening the reins of self-interest. To understand how Friedman and Samuelson could end up on the same side of *any* debate, it is worth pondering a passage from the early 1990's cult classic, *An Incomplete Education*:

> To get a firm grasp on profit and its counterpart, loss, you might want to consider the Biblical quotation, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his soul?" For an economist, the correct way to answer this question would be to calculate the revenues received from gaining the whole world and subtract the costs incurred by losing one's soul. If the difference (known as "the bottom line") is a positive number, you have a profit.

Indeed, in their dogged pursuit of rational self-interest to the exclusion of much practical information, most of the economists discussed in Nelson's book come across as extremely odd characters. When Stigler turned Chicago-style analysis on the Chicago School itself, he determined that its members were either tools, advancing the interests of the wealthy by stealth, or were prey to an irrational belief, trying to convince others of that thing for reasons that would forever remain beyond the scope of economic analysis. Moreover, when we set the supposedly singular analytic achievements of Adam Smith in the context of his time, we discover them to be not original insights at all but simply brilliant reiterations of previous ideas.

Who were the thinkers who first stated those ideas? No other than Catholic theologians, from St. Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus to Dominique Banez. After examining the idea of "just price," Joseph Schumpeter explained that, for the theologians, when the abstractions were boiled away, it was "simply [the] normal competitive price." Theological consensus generally prescribed only three criteria under which interventions in the market were justified: price discrimination, collusion, and gouging. As Nelson comments dryly:

> What is remarkable is that these three conditions of medieval "injustice," as derived from natural-law theological reasoning of the times, prescribe almost exactly the same sets of policies for curbing self-interest in the market that have been widely recommended by leading economic and other defenders of the welfare and regulatory state in the twentieth century.

In the ongoing argument over whether economics should be ranked as an empirical or a social science, Nelson situates it much closer to the latter. No one economic model, for instance, has come anywhere close to accounting for the economic choices of modern corporations. All talk of *ceteris paribus* glosses over the fact that there are simply too many variables, even in the most transparent of corporate cultures, for economics to be of much analytical use.

While he finds the discipline valid, Nelson refuses to locate the utility of economics in its predictive powers. Most economic truths, he believes, are too obvious (man is selfish, prices help us to decide between things, we do not work as hard without incentives, *etc.*) to grant the profession the scientific mantle that it covets. Rather, the strength of economics has come historically in the form of the advantage provided—from Adam Smith to Paul Samuelson to celebrity economists of the present day—by a secular clergy whose job it is to bless the market, day in and day out, with the reigning economic spirit of the age.

Jeremy Lott is the 2002 Burton C. Gray memorial intern for Reason *magazine.*

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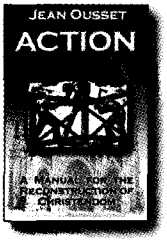

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A Limited Victory

by Thomas E. Woods, Jr.

Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated
by Gore Vidal
New York: Thunder's Mouth Press; 160 pp., $10.00

◆

Gore Vidal, award-winning essayist, novelist, and playwright, has been a keen observer of American culture and politics for several decades. Yet when he originally submitted to major American magazines of opinion the essay that forms the first chapter of his new book, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, he found himself completely shut out. No one wanted to publish his point of view or, indeed, much of anything that defied the government line—straight out of the Madeleine Albright Book of Inanities—

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that America had been attacked because some people just hate democracy.

Jang, the leading Pakistani daily, summed up the state of official opinion in the United States at the time:

> Not a single media commentary from the United States has hinted at a critical appreciation of the country's foreign policy. Only one statement is being repeated, that the terrorism against America will be responded to and the terrorists will be crushed.

But any intelligent person must at least be curious about what motivates the type of savagery we observed on September 11, and most people are surely capable of making the elementary distinction between explaining an event and excusing it. When such questions are posed, however, our ruling class offers us "responses that ought not to satisfy a second-grader," as Pat Buchanan recently put it.

The title of Vidal's book is somewhat misleading, since just over a quarter of the text is devoted to American foreign policy and September 11. A great deal of the book involves the Timothy McVeigh case—a shame, since Vidal's take on the war on terrorism is currently of much greater import. Still, it is worth reading Vidal's analysis of the McVeigh saga, which includes a discussion of the provocations that have brought about the profound alienation of a considerable minority of Americans (*e.g.*, the patriot and militia movements), a brief outline of McVeigh's personal history, and an interesting analysis of what Vidal shows to be an investigation almost criminal in its ineptitude.

The connection between Oklahoma City and September 11, according to Vidal, is that, while each atrocity is obviously inexcusable and morally despicable, both cases involve especially excitable people who believe that the actions of the U.S. government justified their conduct.

"Since I am a loyal American," Vidal says of September 11, "I am not supposed to tell you *why* this has taken place, but then it is not usual for us to examine why *anything* happens; we simply accuse others of motiveless malignity." None of the standard explanations make much sense, he adds, but

> our rulers for more than half a century have made sure that we are never to be told the truth about anything that our government has done to other people, not to mention, in McVeigh's case, our own.

All Americans get is a ceaseless stream of stories about "mad Osama and cowardly McVeigh," thereby "convincing most Americans that only a couple of freaks would ever dare strike at a nation that sees itself as close to perfection as any human society can come."

Since the end of the Cold War, some excellent foreign-policy analysis has come from writers who associate themselves with the left—Edward Said and Alexander Cockburn, for example. In Vidal's book, though, his leftism pops up here and there, and on some questions, especially his warnings about a phantom "far right" in America, his opinions turn out to be drearily conventional and mainstream.

Thus, in an unintentionally funny chapter called "The New Theocrats," Vidal goes after the Southern Baptists, whose announcement of a boycott of the Disney company sounds to him rather like "a pretrial deposition from Salem's glory days." I expect a little more nuance from a "distinguished man of letters," as Vidal is usually described. Calling the almost pathetically timid Christian Right "theocrats" when much of what they advocate amounts to the perfectly American desire to be left alone borders on the hysterical. The grassroots of the Christian Right consist of basically decent folk doing the best they can in a world virulently hostile to basic norms of behavior that previous generations took for granted. Vidal calls upon Disney to "throw the full weight of its wealth at the Baptists, who need a lesson in constitutional law they will not soon forget." He suggests bringing this gaggle of would-be tyrants up on charges of "restraint of trade" and deplores the chilling effect that such a boycott would have on free speech.

Why, in a free society, people should not be allowed to exercise a voluntary campaign of abstention from patronizing a firm whose product they (and, with them, the entire world two generations ago) find repulsive is left unclear. But Vidal insists that we must, at all costs, prevent these Christians from establishing a theocratic hold over our society, an outcome about as likely as a restoration of the Stuarts. For a man who goes to such effort to plumb the depths of Timothy McVeigh's soul, Vidal is ludicrously hostile toward a group of normal Americans whom he makes no comparable effort to understand.

Vidal refers—in passing, and not very originally—to Newt Gingrich's pathetically toothless 1994 Contract With America as the Contract *on* America. Again, I would expect a great man of letters to be able to see the obvious: Gingrich's "Contract" signified once and for all the end of any serious conservative opposition to the federal apparatus, which it left almost completely untouched. Elsewhere, he lashes out at something he calls the "Roman Catholic far right," despite the fact that there is obviously no far right anywhere on the American political scene. Again, most of the conservative Catholic positions to which Vidal doubtless objects are matters of morality that were fairly mainstream a mere two generations ago. It has since become "far right" to believe what everyone's parents once took for granted. To be sure, former FBI Director Louis Freeh has plenty to answer for, but most sinister in Vidal's eyes is that he belonged to Opus Dei, a conservative Catholic organization that Vidal calls "an absolutist religious order." He finds it "most disturbing" that such a figure should hold such a high office in our secular United States. (I do not recall spending many anguished nights fretting about the imminent Christianization of the U.S.A. via the FBI.)

Despite my criticisms, which admittedly deal with only minor portions of the book, Vidal's work is almost infinitely more thoughtful and worthwhile than the condescending banalities of William Bennett, whose *Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terrorism* suggests that even to look for the motives of the September 11 attackers constitutes "relativism" and a crime against God and country. Vidal is only saying what Buchanan has already said: Terrorism is the price of empire.

Having read Hilaire Belloc, I am well aware of the argument that the Muslim world may never reconcile itself to a program of peaceful coexistence with the "Christian" West and that even a serious effort to tame the American empire would not necessarily put an end to terrorism. But the United States enjoyed a great deal of prestige and good will in the Middle East during the early 20th century, from the end of World War I until Harry Truman's fateful decision to cast America's lot with Israel. The Middle Eastern states that were carved out of the defunct

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Ottoman Empire, assigned as League of Nations mandates to France and Britain, overwhelmingly favored being governed as mandates by the United States.

It is dramatically urgent that the point of view Vidal expresses in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* gain as much exposure as possible, for it constitutes the essential rejoinder to the neoconservatives, who refuse to learn any lessons from anything or to consider giving up on empire and letting us live as a normal country again. Vidal concludes: "We have allowed our institutions to be taken over in the name of a globalized American empire that is totally alien in concept to anything our founders had in mind." Every time forbidden opinions like Vidal's find their way into print, the Old Republic scores a limited victory. Whether the cogency of Vidal's position is enough to break through the ignorance and complacency that bred the American Empire in the first place remains to be seen.

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Ignorance Is Bliss

by Joe Guzzardi

Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News
by Bernard Goldberg
Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing; 234 pp., $27.95

Coloring the News: How Crusading for Diversity Has Corrupted American Journalism
by William McGowan
San Francisco: Encounter Books; 250 pp., $25.95

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The question of whether the media has a liberal bias is, on the face of it, absurd. No one who reads newspapers—fewer people with every passing day—or watches the major networks—those numbers are plunging also—is not fully aware that the liberal slant in the news is alive and thriving. Nevertheless, Bernard Goldberg's *Bias* and William McGowan's *Coloring the News* are worth reading.

Goldberg, an Emmy Award-winning correspondent and 28-year veteran of CBS News, provides an insider's look at the inner workings of CBS. *Bias* reveals, among other things, how the media became a tool, in Goldberg's opinion, for homeless and AIDS lobby groups; how they shut out conservative voices from the abortion debate; how female news producers disparage the contributions of stay-at-home mothers and air stories promoting daycare; how the media bend over backward to cover racial issues in a "sensitive" way during prime time, while ignoring minorities in order to attract a more affluent "white" audience. (Race is a major topic in Goldberg's book. Goldberg reports that, during the May 2000 sweeps, CBS's *48 Hours* and NBC's *Dateline* ran no stories about blacks.)

Goldberg claims that even CBS executives acknowledge a liberal bias in the industry, among them CBS News President Andrew Heyward, who once told him: "Look, Bernie, of course there's a liberal bias in the news. All the networks tilt left. . . . If you repeat any of this, I'll deny it." (And, naturally, in a post-publication interview, Heyward denied the statement without further comment.)

Bias contains plenty of fascinating tidbits for news junkies. Dan Rather, whom Goldberg describes as a friend, comes across as a cutthroat, "ruthless and unforgiving," with a heavy dose of Nixonian "paranoia." From a *48 Hours Survival Guide*, Goldberg produces the following maxim: "Looks count, too. You can find the most articulate character in the world but if she has no teeth or has a beard, no one will hear what she's saying." (Susan Zirinsky, executive producer of *48 Hours*, claims that the guide is no longer in print.) Goldberg reports a CBS conference call in which presidential candidate Gary Bauer was referred to as "the little nut from the Christian group." Not surprisingly, Goldberg's former colleagues at CBS do not have much good to say about *him*. Among them, Chief Washington Correspondent Bob Schieffer is the most diplomatic, remarking, "In the end, Goldberg seemed to think his job was to report *on* CBS instead of reporting *for* CBS." Other, less kind comments include those of correspondent Eric Engberg, who called *Bias* an "act of treason" and referred to Goldberg as "a sleazy snake-in-the-grass."

In the final analysis, however, *Bias* has a distracting, whiny tone that dilutes Goldberg's case. A better investment of your time and money is *Coloring the News* by William McGowan, who charges that the nation's major news companies—Gannett, Knight Ridder, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and, most importantly, the *New York Times*—have succumbed to a "disturbing conformity." According to McGowan, this pattern is most evident in stories dealing with such controversial subjects as race, abortion, homosexual rights, multiculturalism, bilingual education, affirmative action, and immigration. "Far from being a progressive source of new ideas," McGowan writes, "in many instances the press represents a tired bulwark of liberal dogma and reacting [*sic*], enforcing a PC conventional wisdom."

Professional standards in print journalism have fallen by the wayside in our era of "diversity training." McGowan believes that the obsession with diversity has undermined the morale of newsrooms and watered down the quality of the stories emerging from them. Within the diversity-driven newsroom, thoughtful questions about race or immigration simply are not permitted, since industry forces (publishers and editors) and outside influences (militant organizations of minority journalists, activists for various rights groups) have snuffed out reasoned discussion. Examples are Gannett's "content audit," requiring editors and reporters to quote sufficient blacks and Latinos from a minority source list in the interest of "reflect[ing] the face of the country," and the same company's refusal to use photographs that portrayed minorities in an unfavorable light. Reporters and editors could qualify for bonuses and promotions by following the Gannett guidelines; failure to follow company policy—or even the perception of failure—might result in dismissal.

The Gannett-owned *Free Press* in Burlington, Vermont, fired Paul Teetor, a respected reporter, in a meeting lasting a minute and a half, at the demand of Rodney Peterson, a black activist. Teetor had written a story that, according to Peterson, was racist. The *Free Press*, under heavy pressure from Gannett headquarters in Virginia to print more favorable stories about minorities, caved in without a fight. Teetor sued the paper and won. Subsequently, Gannett claimed to have eliminated its "content audit," though you would never know it from reading a Gannett newspaper.

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McGowan found immigration stories to be particularly tendentious. His chapter on immigration opens with a consideration of a front-page story in a June 1999 number of the *New York Times*, "Seeking Father, Boy Makes a 3,200 Mile Odyssey." According to this incredible account, 13-year-old Edwin Sabillon departed hurricane-devastated Honduras bound for Queens with $24 and three cookies in his pockets, after receiving a letter from his father, whom he had never met, begging the child to meet him at La Guardia Airport. According to the account in the *Times*, Sabillon crossed the Guatemalan, Mexican, and United States borders and, with the help of strangers, was eventually united with his father.

I recall reading the story when it appeared, and I did not believe a word of it. Had the reporter or the editors just an iota of skepticism (and how could they not?), the story would never have seen the light of day. But because not one fact was verified, Sabillon's tall tale ended up on the front page of the prestigious *New York Times*. Before the week was out, reporters from the Associated Press and New York's *Newsday* went to Honduras looking for a follow-up. They found that the Sabillons had fabricated almost every detail. The *Times* printed its retraction, "Boy's Tale Mostly Fiction, Officials Say," buried deep inside the Metro section. Instead of apologizing to their readers, the editors were dismissive of their error. To those who said the paper committed a major blunder by relying on Sabillon's account without verification, *Times* editor Joyce Purnick replied, "I don't see this as a major black eye for the media." According to the *Times*, Sabillon, or at least the lies he told, symbolized "the plucky virtues of immigrants."

Most of the questions McGowan asks in *Coloring the News* have been pondered by readers nationwide for years. The majority of Americans favor a reduction in the level of legal immigration—but where does one find their opinions? A large but unheard segment of the country is profoundly opposed to abortion—and their views should be voiced. Why is the liberal bias so deeply ingrained in the media? McGowan writes that, when he approached reporters to discuss examples of unprofessional or skewed reporting, they regarded him "the way a taxpayer might regard a revenue officer calling from the IRS." They insisted that any particular story might appear one-sided, but, over the long haul, they believed, an analysis of many stories would confirm that no ideological bias exists. Of course, the reverse is true: Only by looking at stories over a prolonged period of time does the agenda of the print media become painfully obvious.

Robert Samuelson of the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* has the spot-on answer to the question, "Why?" First, Samuelson says, the national media do not so much deny that a liberal bias exists as simply ignore the charge. "Liberal bias" does not mean that the press favors Democrats over Republicans, as was common in the 19th and 20th centuries; rather, "The bias is more subtle."

> Some groups and ideas are treated well in coverage because they seem praiseworthy and "right." Others are disdained because they seem questionable or "fringe." Among journalists, pressures for intellectual and social conformity mean that challenges to what "everyone believes" are rare. Journalists, like most people, want to be liked and respected by peers.

In other words: If you are for open borders, expanded rights for homosexuals, or a woman's "right to choose," the media have determined that you are on the "right" side of the issue. You can expect favorable coverage. If, on the other hand, you favor reduced levels of immigration, restrictions on homosexual rights, and are pro-life, your position will be marginalized or ignored. You are on the "fringe."

According to the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, only six percent of the press identify themselves as "conservative" and four percent, as Republican. (Among the public, the percentages are 35 and 28, respectively.) The real issue, perhaps, is not media bias but whether journalists have any interest in hearing the other side of the story. (They profess to encourage open and honest debate, after all.)

I decided to find the answer for myself, after Peter Schrag, former editorial-page editor for the *Sacramento Bee* and currently a columnist for the same paper, wrote a tepid review of *Coloring the News* in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. While acknowledging that the book makes some important points, Schrag found it lacking in historical perspective and insufficiently documented. And he was quick to defend the policies of the McClatchy Company newspapers. Since Schrag and I are both residents of Northern California as well as columnists concerned about standards in journalism, I sent him a friendly e-mail asking for an appointment to discuss his review.

I told Mr. Schrag that I had read and admired his book *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*, adding that I am involved in a long-term project to evaluate fairness and balance in the media. To bring him up to date on my findings, I sent him a link to a *Denver Post* column by Al Knight about this project. Finally, I mentioned that, in the course of my research, I had had occasion to call senior editors and reporters at the *Bee* newspapers in Sacramento, Modesto, and Fresno. I suggested that Schrag might be interested in hearing what I had learned from those contacts. When, after a week, I had no word from Mr. Schrag, I sent an equally friendly follow-up message. I am still waiting for a reply.

Perhaps Schrag sensed that my experiences with the *Bee* newspapers were not good ones. In fact, over the course of several months, I could not get anyone from any *Bee* paper to return a single call.

Samuelson has the best take on the problem: The mainstream media have a well-defined agenda. The best way for journalists to deal with those of us who oppose them is simply to ignore us.

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LIBERAL ARTS

AMERICA HAS CHANGED

"DMV is issuing new EMPIRE plates to replace New York's LIBERTY plates."
—from a New York Department of Motor Vehicles license-plate renewal form

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by Scott P. Richert

One More Such Victory . . .

June 30, 2002, arrived with little fanfare, an odd ending to 13 years of judicial tyranny here in Rockford. Perhaps that's because the Rockford school-desegregation lawsuit officially ended on a Sunday; more likely, it's because most Rockfordians didn't realize the significance of that day (just as they never quite understood what has happened over the past 13 years), while those who did understand were too busy breathing a sigh of relief to shout for joy. The local Gannett paper (LGP) ran a fairly subdued story, with none of the hysterics that have often colored their coverage of the case (they saved those for Executive Editor Linda Grist Cunningham's column the next week); but the *Rock River Times*, a local weekly that often provided the only honest coverage of the lawsuit (outside of the pages of *Chronicles*, of course), did not mention the event in its July 3-9 issue, even though its editor and publisher, Frank Schier, must have found the Independence Day theme hard to resist. *It's over*, the silence fairly screamed. *Let's get on with our lives.*

But after 13 years and nearly a third of a billion dollars, is it actually over? Set aside (for the moment) the question of whether District 205 is likely to be sued again. (I would lay better than even odds that another lawsuit will be filed within the year.) What about what Mrs. Cunningham calls "the $250 million question"? (Even now that the lawsuit has ended, the LGP continues to revise down the costs.) In her column on July 7, she asks whether "Rockford learned its lessons about discrimination and the questions of equality in education." But the very question, and Mrs. Cunningham's insistence that Rockford taxpayers must continue to spend vast amounts on public education (currently, close to $10,000 per student), shows that she, like some of the school-board members who opposed the lawsuit, still doesn't understand the main issue. Federal Magistrate P. Michael Mahoney's obsession with racial quotas, both by school and by classroom, had virtually nothing to do with "equality in education" and even less to do with *quality* in education. If it had, then the Rockford school system—now the most desegregated district in the nation—would not have 23 schools—half of the schools in the district—on the state's educational watch list and nine on the federal "No Child Left Behind" watch list. The same is true of educational funding.

From very early on, the LGP and other supporters of the lawsuit argued that the quickest way to regain local control was to comply with the court's orders. The argument was disingenuous: What they really wanted was not to end the lawsuit but to convince the opposition to support the court's social engineering. As Mrs. Cunningham wrote on July 7:

> I believe the federal court with its explicit and expensive remedies was bound and determined to make Rockford do right by its black and Hispanic students, and, if that cost a lot of money, which it did, so be it. For the court, the $250 million was a small price to pay for doing the right thing.

According to Mrs. Cunningham, the court's social-engineering schemes were necessary because

> I believe there were seriously bigoted people who deliberately harmed black and Hispanic students. I also believe those deliberate bigots were few and far between. Most of Rockford just paid no attention to the discrimination: whites because they didn't know it was going on, or closed their eyes to it; blacks and Hispanics because they accepted such discrimination as "just the way things are done here."

By defining the argument in terms of the best way to end the lawsuit, the supporters of the court's social engineering eventually succeeded in convincing school-board members Ted Biondo and Patti Delugas—who were elected on promises to end judicial taxation, cut spending, and cut the taxes that were under their control—to focus their efforts instead on ending the lawsuit, even if that meant voting for illegal taxes and leaving in place expensive (and educationally destructive) programs ordered by the court. In the process, they alienated their supporters, expropriated two more years' worth of illegal taxes (only 80 percent of which were later paid back to the small minority of taxpayers who had protested their taxes), and hired a superintendent who, during his public interviews, declared that he could help the Rockford school district increase its funding. And he has—since his arrival, District 205 has passed three referenda, and the school board is currently debating placing a fourth on the ballot this November. As a result, both property-tax rates and spending are only marginally lower than they were at the height of the lawsuit.

After 13 years of federal control, School District 205 has fewer schools and fewer students; higher taxes; runaway spending; lower test scores (despite the efforts of the new superintendent's handpicked director of testing, who was fired after board member Stephanie Caltagerone discovered that she had manipulated test scores to make it appear that they were rising rather than declining); institutionalized busing; a massive bilingual program (including an entire bilingual school); social promotion (which resulted in at least 23 eighth-grade students who received straight "F"s passing on to ninth grade, including one student who attended all of *five* days of school last year); and a curriculum designed to bring about Mrs. Cunningham's desired "equality of education," as long as she means the equality of dunces.

It is one thing to have brought an end to the lawsuit; it would have been quite another if Ted Biondo and Patti Delugas had stuck to their guns and ended it *properly*. As King Pyrrhus discovered at Heraclea and Asculum, some victories come at too great a cost. ·c·

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Letter From Louisiana

by Roger Busbice

Putting the Children First

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Until the mid-1970's, public education in Louisiana, like that in much of rural America, was solidly and successfully based on traditional methodology and philosophy, which emphasized academic excellence, an honest curriculum, discipline, and civic responsibility. Administrators and teachers considered themselves to be true professionals with an accompanying moral obligation not only to provide quality education to the children of the state but to strengthen those children in their appreciation of knowledge, patriotism, and civilization. As professionals, educators were prepared to sacrifice time and effort, during school hours and after, to ensure the success of their students. As did the *virtus* of the Roman republic, civic virtue in Louisiana depended on the dedication and selfless devotion of the state's teachers.

Louisiana's teacher organizations at that time reflected the legacy of racial segregation. The Louisiana Education Association (LEA) consisted primarily of black teachers and administrators, while the Louisiana Teachers' Association (LTA) was chiefly made up of white educators. In New Orleans, a sociological morass often ignored by the rest of the state, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT), an affiliate of the AFL-CIO's American Federation of Teachers, had gained a foothold. In 1976, the leadership of the LEA and the LTA proposed a merger of the two organizations. The LEA was affiliated with the excessively liberal National Education Association, and it eventually became clear that all members of the new "Louisiana Association of Educators" (LAE), which would result from the merger, would be forced to join the National Education Association, whether or not they agreed with its political and philosophical views.

The majority of LTA members were fundamentally conservative and, despite the pleas of the organization's "progressive" leadership, twice rejected the merger proposal because of the NEA membership requirement. Many Louisiana teachers were fully aware of the National Education Association's left-wing political agenda and wanted no part of it. The NEA was a major contributor to the McGovernite national Democratic Party; it had opposed the American military effort in Vietnam; it advocated counterproductive education doctrines that seemed to be part Rousseau, part John Dewey, and part Governor Moonbeam; and, most damningly, the NEA acted as a union—not as a professional organization.

Machiavellian manipulation by the state officers and staff of the LTA, which included the "busing in" of pro-union teachers from the New Orleans metropolitan area, resulted in a victory for the merger when a third vote was taken in 1977. The LEA and LTA were superseded by the Louisiana Association of Educators, which, indeed, required that every member pay dues not only to local and state organizations but to the National Education Association as well.

Conservative educators in different regions of the state refused to surrender their professional dignity and independence to the LAE or, for that matter, to the LFT. In northern Louisiana, near Shreveport, the Bossier Parish Teachers' Association declared independence and offered membership and tort liability insurance to teachers in other parts of Louisiana. Shortly thereafter, J.P. Johnston, the president of the Bossier Parish group, along with a few other conservative teachers, visited Tyler, Texas, for a meeting with the leaders of the new Texas independent teachers' organization. Inspired by the Texas example, the Professional Educators of Louisiana came into existence in 1978, with a membership of 1,200 teachers concentrated in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the state.

Later, in a separate development, independent-minded conservative teachers from East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Pointe Coupee, Livingston, and Acadia Parishes also rejected the LAE/NEA and formed the Association of Professional Educators in Louisiana. Dr. Fred Smith of Louisiana State University was appointed executive director of this organization, which published a newsletter called, appropriately, *The Professional Teacher*. Representatives of the two nonunion educators' organizations soon began to confer; since their goals and philosophies were virtually identical, a merger was approved in 1987 under the name Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana (A+PEL). The new organization had a statewide membership of over 4,000, a regularly published newsletter, a professional staff, a board of directors, elected state officers, and numerous local chapters. Fundamentally and forthrightly, A+PEL stood for independence in action and philosophy and genuine traditional professionalism, and it offered itself as a positive alternative to all forms of teacher unionism. By its very existence, A+PEL declared that *teachers did not have to accept the partisan doctrines or the bullying tactics of the unions.*

In the years that followed, Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana established valuable connections to civic and business groups throughout the state. Despite A+PEL's unwillingness to endorse political candidates, conservative officeholders and officeseekers expressed support for the organization's philosophy and eagerness to assist with its objectives. A+PEL's influence grew along with its membership, and members of the organization now serve on a wide variety of state education commissions and committees. Governors and legislators applaud A+PEL's determination to "put children first." By steadfastly opposing the "laborizing" of education, by rejecting the strikes and demands for "collective bargaining" that characterize the unions, and by insisting that children should not be "held hostage" by those unions, A+PEL established good working relationships with local school boards and with legislators, resulting in major accomplishments and reforms benefiting Louisiana's teachers, parents, and students. Acknowledging the organization's clout, the Louisiana State Department of Education half-jokingly refers to A+PEL as "the Republican teachers association." A+PEL has shown that quality education can still be effectively defended at the local and state level.

Polly Broussard, A+PEL's current executive director and a veteran fighter for

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independent teachers, has expanded the organization's contacts with similar groups in other states. The Texas Association of Professional Educators, which served as a midwife in the birth of Louisiana's first independent organization, now has 94,000 members; the Professional Association of Georgia Educators claims 46,000; and the Missouri State Teachers' Association has 42,000. Smaller—but equally determined—organizations include South Carolina's Palmetto State Teachers Association, the Professional Educators of Iowa, Professional Educators of North Carolina, Indiana Professional Educators, the Association of Oklahoma Professional Educators, Mississippi Professional Educators, Professional Educators of Tennessee, and the Idaho Association of Professional Educators. Support groups for conservative, nonunion, independent teachers include the Association of American Educators, the Coalition of Independent Education Associations, and the Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism, which is part of the National Right-to-Work Committee.

Firm in its belief that an educators' organization must do more than merely provide liability insurance, legislative representation, and legal services, A+PEL decided to support and promote programs designed to strengthen the subject-matter knowledge and the classroom methodology of teachers at all levels. A+PEL offers workshops and seminars on a variety of professional topics, and, most significantly, sponsors an annual American Studies conference in Baton Rouge featuring noted traditionalist historians, journalists, and educators from throughout North America. Attendance is open to all teachers, regardless of organizational membership, and social-studies teachers are given a stipend. A+PEL has also developed a special Louisiana Studies program and has published a teacher's guide and research booklet on the state's history and government.

Today, Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana boasts approximately 6,000 members, with chapters from the Cajun bayous of the south to the red-clay hills of the northern parishes. Hundreds of A+PEL members can be found in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Monroe, and the other cities and towns of the state. Louisiana teachers who are willing to take a stand for traditional values and true professionalism join A+PEL. Determined that neither their money nor their hearts will go to the liberal leviathans known as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, they join A+PEL. Convinced that teachers must be more than laborers, more than screaming sign-wavers, they join A+PEL.

In recent years, much has been said, especially among conservatives, about the decline and fall of public education in the United States. Independent teachers and the organizations that represent them share the fears and the concerns of most Americans on this issue. They, too, have seen the illiterate graduates, the semiliterate teachers who hold on to their jobs through union pressure, the weak and inept administrators, the falling test scores, and the pervasive ignorance that increasingly characterizes the general population. But, like the biblical remnant, the independent teachers and their organizations are not willing to surrender the field to the forces of "progressivism," nor are they willing to accept the lie that public education can be miraculously salvaged by expanding federal intervention and increasing federal handouts. Independent teachers, like those who belong to A+PEL, know that a renewed allegiance to tradition, to discipline, to genuine academic excellence, and to self-reliance is the only means by which public education may yet be saved.

Roger Busbice writes from Morgan City, Louisiana.

Letter From Verona

by Andrei Navrozov

Stage Fright

◆

"And there was a great cry in Egypt."
—Exodus 12:30

A friend, though less in the sense of an intimate confidant, perhaps, than that of the famously urbane hobgoblin that was the guiding spirit of the old *New Yorker*, writes:

> Having just plowed painfully through your latest (and last!) May 2002 "Letter From (so-called) Milan," I (a long-time subscriber to *Chronicles* and having lived and worked in [Italy] more than 30 years!) found your piece downright insulting, offensive, stupid, sophomoric, flippantly nasty, too clever by half!, and tawdry twaddle—which all your previous pieces of gibberish vulgarly exhibit and regularly deliver—but none to this unreadable degree!

In sober truth, if I were the person my correspondent suspects me of being, I would be offended. I would now be thinking of him as a sworn enemy. I would not dream of helping him to air his grievances or of looking for a kernel of substance in what he writes. I would remind myself that his savagely argumentative letter is two pages long, that it is—significantly—singlespaced, and that he spells "consistently" with an "a." In short, I would behave as any American boor with what is sometimes called *access* (to power, to money, to the media, or, in my own humble case, to this space) is advised to behave when confronted with criticism from somebody without such *access* (in other words, a *sans-culotte*, a nut, a singlespacer). My correspondent goes on:

> Andrei Navrozov, you are, with all due respect, the worst writer ("writer"? You can't even write!) featured in any U.S. monthly published today. Bar none. Your pretentious literary presumption and haughty, limitless hubris are insufferable. Who the hell do you think you are? A latter day Russkie-Lord Byron? And as far as "the telling of lies" and "invention of excuses" that is the Italian character, "already a laughingstock the world over," that's quite enough, sir. You're exhibiting too much of your own! Oh. By the way, you're not possibly one of those displaced Russians who is Jewish now, are you? That might explain your ingratitude.

Admirable sentiments, certainly, and deserving of encouragement, but what has been puzzling me is the excessive precision on the part of the critic, as he insists that I am the worst writer to be found in any *American* journal. What I find so shocking about his claim is the clear implication that, even in the mind of an American—shall we say—"non-

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conformist," who, by his own admission, has spent three decades as an expatriate in Italy, the United States is and forever remains the repository of all reality, of all fantasy, and of all the metaphysical gradations of which the human mind is capable that lie in between.

For, surely, the United States is best understood as the repository of *mass* culture, that is to say, of a culture that is as mercilessly levelling as it is naturally hostile to every manifestation of intellectual autarchy, spiritual eminence, and artistic eccentricity. This applies in equal measure to myself, to Lord Byron (were he to find himself scrutinized by the *New York Times Book Review*), and to our eccentric friend in Italy. Within the scope of a culture so ruthlessly streamlined, would there ever be room, for instance, for his own worthy, albeit not wholly original, pronouncements on the relationship between race and character? Clearly not. Then why on earth should he suppose that, when maximum opprobrium is the underlying aim, it is by far the best to excoriate a writer as an *American* cultural presence?

These were the thoughts in my mind as I traveled to hear the first act of Verdi's *Aida* at the Arena, in fair Verona. I say the first act because, despite the indubitable excellence of some of the cast, I quickly realized that, in the circumstances, I simply could not endure any more invocations to what the German translation of the libretto called *Allmächtger Phta*. I had never been to the Arena before, and as soon as I took my seat in the open-air, football-stadium-shaped amphitheater alongside sentimentally *italienverliebte* Germans in their thousands, I saw that surrounding me on all sides was a kind of dramatization of the mass culture that I had been goaded into contemplating by my American nemesis. Pretty soon, everything I heard began to sound like *The Star-Spangled Banner* performed by the Red Banner Ensemble of Song and Dance. And to abhor such a thing, gentile reader, one need not be either ungrateful or Jewish.

I walked out thinking that the opera theater, as defined throughout Europe by such structures as Teatro alla Scala or Covent Garden, was conceived as an engine of intimacy. The volume ratio between "the stage" and "the audience"—between those producing an aesthetic experience and those consuming it—is roughly that of waiters to diners in a very good and very expensive restaurant. To subvert this ratio, as the German tourist-thronged Arena and all those American-style "concerts in the park" now do, is to McDonaldsize a grand cuisine whose every phase, from Provence farmer to Michelin chef, must be labor-intensive if it is not to be culturally meaningless.

Moreover, key among the engine's components is inequality, which the physical distribution of the conventional opera audience makes palpable. Having finally got hold of a splendid box at Palermo's Teatro Massimo, and of a rather more indifferent one at the Malibran in Venice, I can well appreciate what I would call the articulation of the theater audience, where the subtly graduated tiers of boxes, the various sections of the parterre, and the upper reaches of the galleries provide a culturally indispensable social echo of the heavenly hierarchies of the orchestra pit, at times working like one of those old, cloudy, Venetian glass and mercury amalgam mirrors whereupon the dramatic action on stage is bewitchingly reflected. This, too, is sabotaged at the Arena, where the seats, all more or less "of the same quality," are "served" by the singers' voices in more or less the same way.

In his essay *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill develops Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea that "to render people unlike one another" is a necessary condition of human development, one whose import he sees "every day diminishing." Here, in other words, is Mill's view, *circa* 1860, of the opera-loving audience I observed at the Arena in Verona:

> The circumstances which surround different classes and individuals, and shape their characters, are daily being more assimilated. Formerly, different ranks, different neighbourhoods, different trades and professions, lived in what might be called different worlds; at present, to a great degree in the same. Comparatively speaking, they now read the same things, listen to the same things, see the same things, go to the same places, have their hopes and fears directed to the same objects, have the same rights and liberties, and the same means of asserting them. Great as are the differences of position which remain, they are nothing to those which have ceased.

I am reminded of the well-known story of Rudolf Nureyev, who once found himself in a cafeteria. Informed by one of the cashiers, who then busied himself with calculating the cost of another diner's steaming plate of spaghetti, that theirs was a "self-service" establishment, the great Russian dancer took hold of the plate and hurled it in the miscreant's face with the immortal words, "*Nureyev never serve self*! " This was more than an artist's petulance, I dare say. Rather, the symbolism of the situation in which he had found himself produced the emotionally defiant response to the inescapable suggestion that art, in the West as in his native Soviet Russia, would always be made to serve the mass audience.

So I hope my new friend will realize that it's not my own talent or lack of talent that is at issue here so much as Western civilization's headlong plunge into uniformity and mediocrity, no less dastardly and suicidal because foreseen by Mill all those generations ago. My friend and I are actually in the same boat, which has long been adrift. Only I try to do my best writing a firsthand account of the disaster, while he is busy chewing on my other hand.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Baltimore

by Brian Kirkpatrick

Catholic Charity

◆

I heard the latest twist in the story at the end of our two hours of teaching English at the Catholic mission. We volunteers taught the Latin American students—six simultaneous classes at different levels—in one big, noisy room. The noise of our lessons subsided when Sister clapped her hands to get everyone's attention then started making announcements in English for the volunteers. She wanted us to know that the little mission sold books at cost: picture dictionaries in English and Spanish, grammar texts. We shouldn't think that none of our students could afford them because many of them had jobs.

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One of the volunteers, a woman of 65, sauntered over. "They're staying," she muttered, glancing surreptitiously at the beautiful Colombian woman of 35 who stood ten feet behind me.

On the other side of the room, another staff member, a woman from Guatemala, took over the announcements, this time in Spanish for the students. Johns Hopkins, she said, had a gynecology clinic with Spanish-speaking staff and a sliding scale. Many of the recent immigrants weren't used to having regular gynecological exams, but they were a good idea.

"Do they have permanent visas yet?" I whispered. The last I'd heard, the Colombian woman's husband had been in the hands of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Miami. She and her two children had gotten into the sights of the INS as well.

"No, but they have an apartment. I put them up at a hotel."

"You paid for it?"

"Just three days. I've been their taxi for a week."

"Listen, don't get yourself into trouble," I said. "Don't do anything illegal." At the time I didn't give any thought to giving advice to a woman many years my senior. The nun took over the announcements again, shifting into Spanish with a strong Baltimore accent.

While Sister talked, my friend muttered that she had taken the Colombian family to see a congressman, who said he was trying to pass a law to loosen the immigration rules for people from Colombia because of their civil war. I knew that the couple had a *finca*—a country home—outside one of the cities in the coffee region, but they had left without selling it because the husband was worried that the guerrillas would make him a target. He was an architect in Colombia; in the United States, he was painting houses.

"I'm exhausted from all this," my friend said.

"There's a bottomless pit of human suffering," I said. "I understand you want to help them; just don't jump into the pit with them."

"I know," my friend said with anguish. "But even his sister threw them out."

"She doesn't want to lose her visa. And she might if the INS catches her breaking the law."

A tiny Argentine woman who taught English with the rest of us told the students that, before she retired, she had been a physician at Hopkins. She started talking about Human Papilloma Virus as a risk factor for cervical cancer. I smiled at her accent, so different from the Latin countries north of Brazil.

"They found an apartment," my friend said, avoiding eye contact with the Colombian woman. The *colombiana* was watching us with curiosity, probably wondering why we weren't listening to the announcements. "Can you imagine renting a place when you don't have any documents?"

"A lot of people do it. You put down a big cash deposit," I said.

"They got an apartment with all this trash. They carted out ten boxes of it. Now it's spotless. They're willing to work."

The announcements ended, and the students started moving toward the elevator. My student for the day—a 50-year-old carpenter from southern Mexico with three years of education, who had struggled valiantly for two hours to learn the English alphabet—shook my hand and left. I found myself in a circle with Sister, the other volunteer, and the Colombian woman. The three of us kept two conversations going as we slowly worked our way toward the elevator. In the first, we three Americans—two Irish Catholic women and a Scottish Protestant—tried to advise the Latin woman about schools for her children. Since the Colombian woman didn't speak English, she could not follow the other conversation. We didn't want her to.

Sister asked the *colombiana* if her children had been attending school during the excitement. She dove into a complicated story about the children. Thinking I'd heard evasions from her before, I told Sister in English, "She didn't answer you."

"I know," Sister replied cheerfully.

While I tried to explain to the Colombian woman the concept of living in the Baltimore City school district, as opposed to the one in Baltimore County, Sister listened to my friend's story about spending hours each day helping this family.

"You can help them too much," Sister warned my friend. "I need to send you to a course at Catholic Charities. Some of them, you give them too much and they just want more." She was referring to the offices near the archdiocesan headquarters downtown.

"This runs in my family," my friend confessed.

"All the more reason to worry about you," I said.

Sister put her hand on my friend's arm. "You need a course on social work."

My friend, the *colombiana*, and I got into the elevator. My friend told me she was driving the Colombian woman home.

"I respect your wanting to be generous. That sort of thing can give life meaning," I said.

"They're in such a terrible situation."

I looked at the Colombian woman. When I'd heard the last twist in this tale at the mission's fundraiser two weeks before, my friend had commented on how beautiful this woman was. At the time, I'd thought about what models really looked like and decided this woman was too beautiful to be a model, too feminine. "If you were a man, I could understand your being getting over-involved with a beautiful woman," I told my friend. She laughed.

I wished the Colombian woman good luck, and she got into my friend's car. It was a bright Saturday noon, so I walked down Broadway toward the water, thinking about lunch and Catholic charity as I passed the Polish Social Club, the Love Zone, the Baltimore Boxing Club, and the psychotic panhandler who asked me for precisely four cents.

I went to a sandwich shop and thought about the three women as I ate lunch. Sister had dedicated her life to helping other people and had found that the best way to do it entailed saying *no* sometimes. I wondered if she voted for people who wanted to give money to teenaged girls to have babies. I had no doubts my friend did.

I decided there were quite a few more people who needed a good course on Catholic charity. These days, our charity is funneled through the federal government, which destroys everything it claims to help. We put unqualified people into jobs in the name of "compassion" and tell minorities lies that incapacitate: that they can't succeed in life, that white hatred surrounds them. We give our money to strangers and hurt ourselves because our help in the long run leads to more violence and the destruction of our schools and other institutions. We hurt the people we claim to be helping, but we get to think ourselves generous and compassionate.

My generous friend, despite her experience with husbands, boyfriends, and jobs outside the Church, didn't seem to understand what Sister, with a life that many might think sheltered and narrow, understood perfectly: that some things

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that people call "compassion" or "charity" are toxic. Sister needs to get her hands not only on my fellow volunteers but on our politicians as well. With her firm instruction, perhaps they could learn that, if we have a true compassion for other people, we will respect what is strong in them, avoid dwelling on their weakness, and avoid the pleasures of thinking ourselves virtuous as we undermine the strengths of others.

I don't think Sister spends much time congratulating herself for her good deeds or feeling sorry for people. She's too busy telling them how they can help themselves. She's too busy loving people to try to impress herself and the world with the depth of her compassion, too busy making the people who come to her mission stronger than they were when they first walked in her door.

Brian Kirkpatrick writes from Baltimore, Maryland.

Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

You Can't Get There From Here

◆

The sun is shining on a typical warm day. I roll my sleeves up, let the window down, and watch the train go by. The battered Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Santa Fe boxcars roll past, clackity-clacking and swaying just a little on their way to "Cow Town."

Then they are gone, so I turn up the CD player. A guitar strums and Texas singer/songwriter Bruce Robison tells an old story:

> You can't get there from here
> You can't live on bread and water
>
> You heard the one about the
> farmer's daughter?
> She just needs a little atmosphere
>
> You don't pick your occupation,
> I didn't ask for this frustration
>
> I need a life and an ice-cold beer
> And you can't get there from here . . .
> So many broken dreams in the world.

So much unhappiness. But what can I do about it? What can any of us do?

Something about the Texas troubadour's sad words jogs my memory. I was at the grocery store. I usually just hurry through, picking up a little of this or that, and head over to the express checkout line. A couple of checkers are usually stationed there with whom I like to shoot the breeze.

One of them is an older man—at least he looks older—with a face that makes Willie Nelson look young and handsome. He has a tattoo on one arm that's so blurred that I can't make out if it's a bird (an eagle?) or something like one of those "Mom" devotionals you still see here and there. He always looks a little sad but perks up when you speak to him.

The other is a young girl—too young, it seems to me, to be working full-time, but there she is. She's carrying a baby. (I never have liked the clinical term "pregnant"; it's just too impersonal.)

On this day, there's a line at the express counter, so a fresh-faced young manager approaches me and asks if I would prefer the do-it-yourself checkout line the store is testing. No checker, just scan it yourself, ring it up, and pay with a debit card. Nice, clean, quick . . . and I tell him I want no part of it. In a nice way, of course.

So I wait behind four or five people who are, perhaps, equally concerned about the future of the young lady—we all know what the scan-it-yourself line will eventually mean. Or maybe the computer stuff just scares the hell out of some of them—I don't know.

The lady in front of me asks the girl how she's doing and when the baby's due. The girl looks tired but says she's fine.

I punch the gas, crossing the tracks and heading for the school to pick up the kids, wondering about my tattooed friend and the girl. She has a trace of acne and looks like a teenager. Maybe she is. He doesn't look like life has been too kind to him.

Or maybe my imagination is just making it up.

Scan-it-yourself. But the store's management proclaims that it is "Concerned About the Future of Our Communities" on a poster just inside the sliding doors.

Well, you can't get there from here, folks.

My wife and I have been shopping for furniture. I try to buy American if I can, though it's becoming more and more difficult, partly because of the policies of a government that thinks it's OK to ask for the lives of your children or for half of your income but won't do anything to help Americans keep their jobs. Not much of a bargain, to my mind.

It turns out that even the American Rustic and Mission-style furniture is made in . . . China. So we keep looking.

After all, you can't live on bread and water.

After I pick the kids up, we cross the tracks again, heading for home. I replay the song, and it makes me think of something—that Western-style belt I just bought.

At a red light, I turn the belt buckle up and squint to see what's stamped on the inside. It reads, in all caps: CHINA.

I sigh and wait for the light to change. I'm sweating—is it that warm?

Wayne Allensworth has a taste for sad songs, which sometimes gets him into trouble.

Letter From North Carolina

by Jeff Minick

Lech Walesa's Winsome Call for Globalization

◆

For the last 20 years of the world's bloodiest century, Lech Walesa, along with Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II, was a man on a pedestal in my pantheon of contemporary heroes, one of those who had helped bring about an end to communism in Eastern Europe and the demise of the Soviet Union. Now, here he stood before me on a warm November afternoon—this leader of Solidarity, Nobel Prize winner, and former president of Poland—speaking through a translator named Magda to more than 300 students in the Hines Auditorium at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Although somewhat heavier these days—he joked about his attempts at dieting, garnering a laugh from the students—Walesa, with his lancer's moustache and rumpled, weary face, still looked very much like the man who had once gazed with implacable determina-

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tion from television screens and magazine covers.

Walesa immediately befriended his audience, telling the students that those who began snoring should move to the back of the room and sharing with them several stories regarding airport inspections since the terrorist attacks on September 11. He then spoke of his role in the battle against communism in Poland. He explained to the students how he and a few others realized that they didn't have the guns to fight a war against the Soviet military and that street demonstrations frequently ended in bloodshed. Unable to follow these traditional paths of resistance to oppression, he and a handful of others devised the unique strategy of taking the workers away from the Communist Party through labor unions.

Walesa gave a good deal of the credit for the success of Solidarity and the failure of the communists to Pope John Paul II—"51 percent of the credit," as he jokingly put it. "Before the Pope first visited Poland, I had ten supporters," Walesa told the students. "After he left Poland, I had ten million supporters." Walesa recognized as well the role played by Solidarity and its fervent members in bringing about the Polish revolution. He added that the support of such countries as the United States and Great Britain had also damaged communist efforts to crush Solidarity. Even Mikhail Gorbachev had helped to topple communism, he joked, telling the students that failure was not always something to be feared, since Gorbachev had received a Nobel Prize for his failure to revitalize Soviet communism.

After concluding his initial remarks, Walesa stated that the subject closest to his heart these days was not the struggle between freedom and oppression, but the struggle for the future: globalization.

Walesa told the students that globalization was the premier issue of their time. In promoting globalization, Walesa first advocated what he called "continentalism," giving the European Union and NAFTA as examples. Once the national governments had joined together on a continental level, globalization would follow. In his description of this global government, Walesa envisioned a world with open borders, a world court, and a world police force. In a breathtaking statement that went unchallenged in the question-and-answer period following his lecture, Walesa even advocated a world religion. "After all," said Walesa, whose support of the Pope and whose large family of eight children would otherwise indicate that he was a practicing Catholic, "there is only one God," adding that we therefore needed only one religion in which to worship that God.

Walesa also briefly addressed the fate that might befall nations failing to endorse such a plan of globalization. He compared the countries of the world to a set of Legos. Each block, Walesa said, is different in size and color, yet all fit together into a larger pattern. If some of the blocks are flawed, it is sometimes necessary to push them together more firmly. Sometimes, too, a block might be so flawed that it will not fit at all into the pattern. These blocks, Walesa said ominously, must be thrown away.

What astounded me about Walesa's advocacy of globalization—other than the fact that he advocated it at all—was his unquestioning adherence to such an idea. His simplistic approach and the faulty reasoning evidenced in a number of his remarks were shocking, particularly coming from a man who, in so many other ways, was a realist in politics. Walesa gave not a hint that globalization might have any drawbacks. He never defined "globalization." He apparently regarded it much as a 19th-century transcendentalist might have regarded Utopia—that is, as an undefined goal whose conclusion always lay just around the next bend of the road. Sounding at one point like the Marxists with whom he used to do battle, Walesa stated that globalization was "inevitable."

Walesa often seemed mistaken even in his interpretation of history. He stated that the great conflicts of the 20th century were territorial when it might strike many other observers that the great conflicts have been ideological. He stated dogmatically that improved economic circumstances would solve the problems of terrorism, thus ignoring Christ's injunction that the poor would be with us always—as, I suspect, there will always be terrorists of one sort or another. Finally, the Polish leader encouraged young people to focus on the present and the future rather than the past, telling them that he himself had little interest in the past (and so, perhaps, inadvertently explaining why former communists have gained the upper hand in Poland).

Driving home from the lecture late that afternoon, I found my thoughts wandering in half a dozen directions. Were all Nobel Prize winners so ignorant of the topics on which they were paid to lecture? Walesa, at times, reminded me of one of those actors who embarrass themselves on talk shows by touting a cause about which they know nothing at all. And were all globalists—to my Smoky Mountain ears, the very name rings up the cosmopolitan, the sophisticated, the suave—so misguided, so ill informed, and, finally, so silly about the workings of community and the desires of man's heart? Were they all so vague about the ultimate destination of globalization? And, if Lech Walesa was so interested in globalism, why didn't he ask the students what effects, if any, they saw of globalization in their daily lives? If he had so inquired, I might have offered these bits and pieces by way of telling Walesa that my neighbors and I are quite familiar with the effects of globalization.

In 1982, when I moved to Haywood County, North Carolina, to open a bookshop and a bed and breakfast, the chamber of commerce showed me statistics revealing that the county's economy was equally divided, with one third of the county's gross product coming from business and industry, one third from agriculture, and one third from tourism. Today, the apple orchards are gone, victims of the rising cost of land and labor, and the tomato fields are much diminished. The furniture factory, the tannery, the boot factory, and the large Dayco plant—it once employed close to 1,500 people, paying union wages—have either closed their doors or moved overseas. Those people who lost their jobs went to work in retail stores such as Wal-Mart, started their own businesses, or left to find work elsewhere. In the other mountain counties around us, tens of thousands of people lost their jobs when their companies moved their operations abroad.

Wal-Mart, importer of the world's cheap goods made by the hands of cheap labor, came to Haywood County in 1990. Downtown Waynesville has never recovered its lost local business, and, with the exception of grocery stores, the large shopping-plaza retailers—Sky City, Kmart, Dollar Store, Belks, and others—have also either closed their doors or suffered enormous losses since the advent of Wal-Mart.

"I tell young people to become surveyors," a banker told me last year. "Unless you're a doctor or a teacher, there's not going to be much to do in Haywood County for a while. But we have a lot of Floridians building second homes here

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right now, and it's tough finding surveyors." He neglected to mention that these same Floridians are driving up the cost of land and home construction, making it even tougher for our young people to live here.

The effects of Walesa's continentalization are even more pronounced than those of globalization. The 1990 census showed 240 Hispanics living in Haywood County; the 2000 census, 763. Our Hispanic population has tripled in ten years.

A bank manager whom I know asked a Mexican worker for a Social Security card to open a bank account. The worker returned with a card, which proved to be forged from a Chicago man who had recently died. After this card was rejected, the worker returned the next day, spread 12 social security cards across the table and invited the manager to select a card that worked.

Mission Hospital in nearby Asheville has so many Hispanic births that they have hired translators to work in the delivery rooms.

A friend of mine recently asked the receptionist at the Buncombe County Health Department to call a Maria Sanchez to the front desk. "Honey, I've got twelve Maria Sanchezes here today," the secretary replied with a laugh. "Which one do you want?" Like the proverbial John Smith of the No-Tell Motel, Maria Sanchez is apparently the name of choice used by young women from Mexico when illegally taking advantage of the social-services system.

"Hispanics are family oriented," an Hispanic friend of mine told me. "Besides, they work harder than Anglos. They just might save our country." Mulling over my friend's statement, I think about Mexico with its century-long government corruption, its oppression of the poor, its graft, and its literal inability, at times, to function as a modern nation. Is that what we want here?

On my drive home through the mountains, I eventually conclude that Walesa and I are using the same vocabulary, but the words have different definitions. For Walesa, *globalization* means peace and unity. For me, *globalization* means coercion, simply another way for the rich and the powerful to maintain order in the marketplace. In former times, goes the old adage, the flag followed business; today, a global government is expected to follow international corporations. I don't give a damn about Wal-Mart's cheap goods if it means that my neighbors are unemployed or that my children won't be able to live here, and I believe that the guy with dirt under his fingernails living in a trailer would agree with me if he thought about it. He might shop at Wal-Mart, but he would give it up in a heartbeat if it meant a better job for himself or jobs for his children.

I don't want neighbors who are living here illegally, who abuse the system, the schools, and the land without helping to pay for them through taxes, service, and the other myriad demands of citizenship. I don't want to live in a bilingual country, nor do I want my children's children living in one. Indeed, I would like to throttle the next smiling soccer mom who tells me that her child is studying Spanish because "she'll need it someday." (I don't consider myself a racist in this regard; I've known some English twits who deserve a good boot to the bottom to send them home. I just happen to think that it's time to stop the invasion of what our government now calls "the homeland.")

Finally, Walesa's Edenic vision does not appeal to me precisely because it is Edenic. Christians used to be accused of naiveté and self-deception for looking for "pie in the sky," for seeking a heavenly Paradise rather than an earthly one, yet, for the past 300 years, those who have tried to create a heaven on earth—philosophes, socialists, communists, fascists, everyone from the fruit-and-nut communalists of the 19th century to the architects of the Great Society—have made a bloody hash of it. Lech Walesa's globalization is another such dream, another Utopia akin, on a larger scale, to the dreams of those murderers whom Walesa once opposed, a script without an ending, a promise of a better way that will likely find its concrete expression in the blood and sacrifice of millions.

Thinking about Walesa's lecture, I kept coming back to John Lennon's song "Imagine":

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today . . .

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace . . .

The tune behind these saccharine, poorly constructed, and antihuman sentiments is a catchy one, and I believe that we localists should make this song our anthem before the globalists do. We should hum "Imagine" wherever the word "globalization" is spoken, even sing it aloud to globalists. We could season the words with a little sarcasm, but the lyrics really speak for themselves. As we hum or sing, we should remember the true meaning behind Lennon's—and Walesa's—message: winsome tune, witless words.

Jeff Minick is the owner of Saints and Scholars Book Company in Waynesville, North Carolina.

Letter From Arkansas

by Greg Kaza

Trucker Economics

◆

Talk about the economy is hotter than the coffee served at the truck stop in West Memphis, the third countertop we've visited in the last 12 hours. It's the graveyard shift, and the waitresses are filling the half-gallon thermoses as fast as truckers can place them on the counter. The Java Cows in the kitchen are working overtime tonight.

Truckers have been called "the last American cowboys." But like their brothers and sisters who build automobiles, they can teach any economist who cares to listen a thing or two about forecasting. At this truck stop, several miles from the Tennessee state line; at another, down the road in Galloway; and at yet another, further west toward Fort Smith, all of today's conversations have revolved around commerce and the state of the economy.

The headlights from dozens of 18-wheelers, a caravan of trade, are reflected in the glass that separates us from the elements. No government economist could centrally plan the commerce flowing through even one truck stop. Nor could he explain—so simply yet eloquently, on a napkin yet—why independents are registering their rigs in neighboring Oklahoma: Registration fees are lower there than in Arkansas. A few days later, at the office in Little Rock, a retired trucker

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conducts a similar exercise in tax policy on a sheet of paper. Yes, many of Arkansas' tax rates are higher than her neighbors', causing businesses to flee and revenues to fall.

This commonsense logic incenses government economists. One, derisive of those who "count the number of cars in parking lots" and rely on anecdotal information from places such as truck stops, recently told Arkansas legislators that the state's record $142-million revenue shortfall was unforeseen because it relied on "scientific forecasts" that did not foresee a crisis. The alleged science, in this instance, is econometrics, mathematical economics. Soon after he spoke, another $172 million in cuts became necessary when revenues continued to fall. In June, another $59-million shortfall was announced.

Arkansas is not alone. Forty states project state budget shortfalls this year totaling $27 billion, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. "State revenues are falling faster than golf records in the Tiger Woods era," NCSL Executive Director William Pond said. Some conservatives argue that the culprit is state spending increases in the 1990's, which (like those in Arkansas) exceeded inflation and growth in personal income. Econometrics, however, has escaped scrutiny.

Yet economists have suffered a black eye in this recession. A year ago, few predicted anything but continued economic expansion (the exception on Wall Street was Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley), and you would not have found a government economist publicly predicting contraction. Government economists have fooled themselves—and state legislators—into believing econometrics is a scientific exercise that can predict the future. Econometrics relies on a process radically different from analyzing the observations on economic conditions of a truck driver, an autoworker, or—most importantly—an entrepreneur. Instead, it creates mathematical models from economic variables and data series. The problem is that, in the real world, these variables constantly change, making the models virtually worthless. (The late economist Murray N. Rothbard once challenged the econometricians to put their money where their math was by using their models to play the stock market.)

Government econometricians see little relevance in a truck driver's comments over coffee about shipments being down. But they should, as should legislators, if those shipments contribute to a decline in the industrial production index (released monthly by the Federal Reserve). There have been ten postwar recessions (according to the National Bureau of Economic Research), and every time industrial production has fallen for four consecutive months, a recession has occurred.

We should view autoworkers' stories about layoffs with the same curiosity. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains employment data on various levels of government and eight private-industry sectors, including manufacturing. The BLS releases data every month on 95 separate categories. After World War II, employment in only eight categories has peaked before, or in the same month, as a recession starts. The largest category to act consistently in this manner is automotive employment.

To their credit, a few Federal Reserve officials have discussed the uses of anecdotal information. "[It] improves upon our understanding of where the economy is and where it might be going, most notably by providing information ahead of formal data," St. Louis Fed President William Poole explained (*The Role of Anecdotal Information in Fed Policymaking*, February 13).

> The process of gathering the information puts us in direct contact with people actually making day-to-day economic decisions. The information forces us to question the formal data and provides a view of the economy that formal methods simply miss.

The Fed makes extensive reference to anecdotes in its Beige Book releases. It is also an open secret among Fed watchers that staff economists following key industries such as automotive are on 24-hour call before Federal Open Market Committee meetings, in case Chairman Alan Greenspan has questions about new data and anecdotes.

A well-known Arkansas trucking executive is said once to have asked, "If it weren't for the high-school graduates, who'd hire all of the Ph.D.'s?" Econometricians' careers are invested in postgraduate studies, and they are loathe to acknowledge that theirs is not a hard science. Instead, they are forever busy building a "better model." Not only do they discount the truck driver's common sense, but many have also forgotten the timeless wisdom of the first forecaster: the farmer.

In eastern Arkansas' Delta, grain elevators dominate the skyline of small agricultural towns such as Stuttgart, home of the state's rice industry, and Dumas and McGehee, which grow cotton. Along Route 65 on the way to Mississippi, there is a small truck stop that serves catfish, hush puppies, and slaw and tops it off with coffee and pecan pie. The locals are guarded but sometimes friendly with advice. "There is a natural order to things," a Delta farmer observes. "Everything in life is a cycle."

Individuals who have faith in cycles understand human frailties and the thin line that holds together the social order. (Man is fallen.) Those who dispute the existence of a natural order tend to believe that all of human experience—including commerce and economic activity—can be reduced to a model. In economics, this type of thinking, taken to its logical conclusion, leads to the mistaken belief that central planners can eliminate business cycles. (Man is perfectible.)

It was March 2001 when we sipped coffee at the truck stop. Eight months later, on November 26, the National Bureau of Economic Research declared March 2001 as the start of the tenth U.S. postwar recession. Man, it seems, is not so perfect after all.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Corporate America in Crisis

The ongoing turmoil in America's stock markets and a series of corporate scandals have attracted considerable attention from commentators and editorialists all over the developed world, who fear that economic instability in the United States may plunge the world's top businesses into a vicious cycle of doubt and deferred capital investment. With the world's stock markets still reeling from a long list of corporate scandals that have destroyed some of America's biggest companies, one comfort appeared to remain: America's economic recovery seemed strong. On the last day of July, however, that reassurance was brushed aside as well, when survey data published by the Federal Reserve confirmed indications of a slowing and even faltering recovery. Some analysts claimed that the bottom has been reached: "It's a time of maximum pessimism, so I must buy more US stocks," declares the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s James Bone. Others—the majority—were markedly more nervous, as the Dow touched its lowest point since October 1998, thus officially wiping out all of the nominal gains made in the dotcom explosion of the late 1990's.

The *Financial Times* saw the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act as "only the first mouthful to feed what looks like an increasingly large appetite for far-reaching overhaul of US corporate governance on the part of the American public":

> The bigger question after Sarbanes-Oxley is what else should be done to correct some of the flaws that continue to be exposed by the receding tide of the 1990s boom . . . the intolerable plundering of nearly bankrupt companies by senior executives as their businesses were going down the drain. A host of other issues—from pension protection to the role of directors—awaits further consideration. All these problems are critical to public confidence in US companies. The trick is to deal with them without putting chief executives in a straitjacket of new regulations that will stifle risk-taking and innovation.

Some analysts are not certain whether the circle can be squared. On July 23, the London *Independent*'s financial columnist Jeremy Warner expressed his fear that the U.S. economy has not yet ground to a halt; unless shares rebound soon, however, it surely will:

> In the US at least, the fear is that the bad news has only just begun. Whether or not shares have fallen so far that they are now fair or good value, investors are in no mood to listen. People believe they were conned during the exuberance of the boom, as indeed they were, and confidence will take a long time to recover . . . President George Bush was at it again yesterday attempting to act as a cheerleader for the stock market. From what he hears "corporate profits are improving, which means value will be available for those who invest in markets." You have to wonder who [*sic*] he is talking to. That's not the word coming down the line from most companies. If Mr. Bush's purpose is that of attempting to bolster confidence, he should take note of how little good came of it when his Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, did the same thing. . . . The fundamentals for US economic growth may be as real as Mr. Bush believes, but if the stock market keeps falling like this, they soon won't be. The summer holidays will provide some respite, but even so the next few weeks could be crucial. It is as if some ghastly meteorite is heading towards us. Will it hit, or is there to be another narrow miss? Recent history would point to the latter outcome. On the other hand, we haven't had a serious economic catastrophe for an awfully long time now.

A fortnight earlier, the *Economist* had noted that, as the first American President with a master's degree in business administration, Mr. Bush was always expected to be more than a little friendly toward Corporate America and Wall Street; but, in the wake of corporate accounting scandals, friendliness to boardrooms and financiers has become a political liability:

> Even now, many of Mr. Bush's measures will require a large amount of self-policing by companies and stock markets. The clamour for tough action has grown with every revelation and every wriggle of highly-paid executives trying to get off the hook. . . . There is no doubt that the corporate scandals have started to harm Mr. Bush's administration and Republicans at large, especially with midterm elections for Congress due in November. What people will now have to decide is whether members of the administration are speaking out only for political purposes or if they are really doing something to clear up corporate abuse. Mr. Bush's new measures will greatly increase the potential punishments facing errant bosses. But will they really go far enough? The SEC is already introducing new requirements for firms. Yet despite this, even more forceful legislation is currently being steered through Congress by Senator Paul Sarbanes. His bill is much tougher on auditing firms than the SEC's proposals. . . . This means Congress may yet seek harsher measures than Mr. Bush's proposals.

In the *Times* of London on July 23, Anatole Kaletsky declared that the collapse of investor confidence has more to do with politics than economics: The Bush administration's immunity to criticism, bestowed on it by September 11, has been shattered by the WorldCom and Enron accounting scandals and the

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personal involvement of the President and Vice President in several questionable transactions. As a result, he writes, the Democrats may win control of both houses of Congress on November 5, paralyzing U.S. politics and turning Bush into a lame duck for his last two years in office. In the meantime, there is no reason for panic:

> Instead of anticipating a recession, investors are just modestly downgrading their expectations for economic growth. At the height of the internet fever, the U.S. was widely expected to enjoy long-term economic growth of 4 per cent a year. A trend growth rate of around 3 per cent always seemed more plausible. But given the long-run strain on the US economy from President Bush's military and fiscal policies, I have long suspected that a growth rate of around 2.5 per cent might be more plausible in the next few years. If this turns out to be true then a downward adjustment would seem quite reasonable. The question is how much more adjustment will be required before investors are prepared for "normal" economic conditions. . . . There is no reason to suppose that stock market slump foreshadows a world recession or any other economic crisis. More likely, it just represents an adjustment to the mundane reality of 2 or 3 per cent growth in the U.S. On this assumption, stock market prices in America are no longer very expensive, as they were in the late 1990s, but neither are they particularly cheap.

Two weeks earlier, *Times* foreign editor Bronwen Maddox argued that the Bush administration would find it more difficult to impose its foreign-policy agenda on its partners as the result of its economic woes:

> Abroad, it is already a clear handicap for Bush. . . . Those who have felt aggrieved by American demands for reform—or are straightforwardly unwilling to comply—are not about to let Bush forget the scandals. This is not a case where he can escape a messy problem at home by reaching abroad for respite.

In France, *Le Monde* questioned whether President Bush might be guilty of the types of crimes he is now denouncing so loudly:

> Revelations about his own oil company sold to Harken Energy and Vice President Chaney's involvement with Halliburton . . . weaken considerably the president's position just months before the mid-term elections. They cast doubt on the Bush administration's determination to eradicate corporate fraud. . . . They re-enforce the old feeling that President Bush owes his personal fortune and his career to practices which may or may not fall within the "ethics" he has been promoting.

The problem of ethics in the American corporate community long antedates the Bush presidency, says the *Guardian* (July 23), harkening back to an unlikely culprit—Lee Iacocca:

> But if it weren't for Iacocca, it is unlikely that we would be talking about Enron and WorldCom today . . . Iacocca's ascent signaled a dramatic change in American culture. Prior to [*sic*] him, the popular image of the American CEO had been of a buttoned-down organisation man, pampered and well paid, but essentially bland and characterless. The idea of the businessman as an outsized, even heroic, figure seemed like the legacy of a long-forgotten past when men like JP Morgan and William Randolph Hearst were still around. In fact, in 1982, *Forbes* magazine wrote, "Tycoons are fairly rare birds in today's business world. We seldom hear of moguls." Within just a few years, that had all changed, with business journalists turning every clever executive with a good idea into the next Henry Ford, and with the Rupert Murdochs, Sumner Redstones, and Donald Trumps of the world actively cultivating the "mogul" label. By the time the boom of the 1990s rolled around, CEOs had become America's superheroes, accorded celebrity treatment and followed with a kind of slavish scrutiny that Alfred P Sloan could never have imagined.

The systemic questions raised by the bursting of the stock-market bubble and the revelations of corporate corruption do not, in the end, have much to do with the virtues or vices of markets *per se*, concludes the *Guardian*. They have to do with the vigilance and regulation that markets need in order to work. The delusion that everyone labored under in the 90's was that self-interest alone would point everyone in the same direction. What is only now becoming clear is that, without the right kind of restraints on self-interest, the system is given to fragmentation. The stock market will be suffering the consequences of these scandals—in the form of lower stock prices and lowered expectations—for years to come. The United States, on the other hand, may escape from all of this without any sustained damage to its real economy:

> The historian Richard McCormick famously argued that Progressivism was the product of "the discovery that business corrupts politics". But what we seem to have discovered in the past year is simply that business corrupts business. It may be an obvious lesson, but apparently it has to be learned over and over again.

The *Economist* noted on August 1 that the risk of another downturn is still present:

> It now turns out that last year's recession was significantly worse than previously estimated, and growth in the first three months of 2002 a bit less impressive than earlier statistics had indicated . . . The new figures are a blow to hopes that America's economic recovery is well established. Suddenly, the recovery looks weak and the economy looks vulnerable to further shocks. The determination of American consumers to keep spending has bolstered the economy for so long. If consumers should now lose heart, as some recent surveys suggest they might, all bets will be off. Another downturn—a so-called "double-dip" recession—would then be highly likely. With Europe and Japan still in the doldrums, the forecasts of steady global growth this year could soon look overly optimistic.

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EDUCATION

Bushwhacking Johnny

by B.K. Eakman

At dinner, ten-year-old Johnny is sullen and uncommunicative. It has been a bad day. His parents pass off his ill humor as "going through a phase." Actually, it was an easy day—taken up with "another stupid school assembly." Johnny had sat there, bored, listening to people drone on about diversity and tolerance. When a lesbian took the stage, Johnny and his soccer buddies had guffawed. Later, the school counselor cornered him at his locker: "You're a big boy now, Johnny. Your Mom and Dad are from another generation, you know, so it's not surprising they wouldn't be tolerant of gay people. You can make up your own mind. You wouldn't want someone looking at you and your friends as 'dumb soccer jocks,' would you?"

Johnny has been subjected to cognitive dissonance, a tactic often used to mold public opinion. Not only does the technique neutralize unwanted input, it's a nearly foolproof method of manipulating groups for political ends. An adult subjected to it at least has the benefit of maturity and experience. He may recognize, however belatedly, the cause of his annoyance. Johnny, however, is too young to weigh matters, so he broods. His confusion may fester for months below any conscious level of awareness.

Technically, cognitive dissonance is "a stressful mental or emotional reaction caused by trying to reconcile two opposing, inconsistent, or conflicting beliefs held simultaneously." In practice, it is a form of mental coercion. (I ought to know: I sat through enough workshops as a prospective educator and practicing teacher. We learned how to disrupt logic, how to make it difficult for the uninitiated to sustain a train of thought.)

Creating a disorienting psychological environment doesn't require an expert agitator or professional provocateur if you can get gullible third parties—teachers, factory workers, even parents—who don't realize what they're doing to do the dirty work. Educators often think that they are using scientific methodology to transmit "thinking skills" or that they are "empowering pupils to be decisionmakers." Budding journalism students may believe they are perfecting interviewing techniques. Political-science majors typically encounter it as "negotiating tactics," which is closer to the truth. But the goal of cognitive dissonance, as with all surreptitious opinion-molding, is to get the target to respond to contrived "stimuli" (especially hot-button topics or situations) with knee-jerk, emotional reactions, leaving reason behind. In so doing, the victim "internalizes," briefly or permanently, an alternate view of reality.

In today's politically correct schools, this is sold as intellectual and academic freedom. Take any controversial issue—*e.g.*, homosexuality—and examine the method used to bushwhack ten-year-old Johnny.

As a pre-adolescent, Johnny naturally looks to his parents as the primary source of authority. But they have made it clear that teachers and other school staff are also his superiors, requiring obedience.

Enter the school counselor: In one fell swoop, she shakes Johnny's confidence in his parents and himself. At ten, Johnny is not mature enough to understand what homosexuals do, but judging from the counselor's comment, it's apparent to him that his parents oppose homosexuality. (The counselor is sure of this because Johnny has completed untold numbers of questionnaires revealing details about his family—from what they read to how they worship.)

The counselor blindsides Johnny on five levels. First, she provides a justification for not abiding by his parents' values. ("They're from another generation.") Then, she strokes Johnny's ego by implying he is more mature than he actually is. ("You're a big boy now.") Next, she plants the idea that his parents' ethics are shallow. ("It's not surprising they wouldn't be tolerant.") Then, she forces Johnny to choose between two opposing authorities under the pretext of thinking independently. ("You can make up your own mind.") Finally, she legitimizes a lifestyle his parents probably oppose. ("Would you want someone looking at you as a 'dumb soccer jock'?")

How can Johnny go to his parents with this? He probably won't even remember the context in which this conversation occurred. How will Johnny resolve the conflict? He doesn't have the opportunity to do that, because the counselor's question called for a response on the spot.

When cognitive dissonance is employed against an unsuspecting person—or worse, against a captive audience such as schoolchildren—the short-term objective is to prompt insecure individuals to find company, leading to a group (mob) mentality. This makes it easier to reverse values held by the majority. "Truth" can even be turned against itself—for example, "freedom of speech" is now used to legitimize pornography. The very people freedom of speech was designed to protect are left not only vulnerable but suspicious of the principle itself.

What "new values" are educators trying to instill? Here is a seven-point list, given to educators in North Carolina at an in-service workshop:

> There is no right or wrong, only conditioned responses.
>
> The collective good is more important than the individual.
>
> Consensus is more important than principle.
>
> Flexibility is more important than accomplishment.
>
> Nothing is permanent except change.
>
> All ethics are situational; there are no moral absolutes.
>
> There are no perpetrators, only victims.

Notice that all of the items on this list involve no particular issue; rather, they reflect ethical "outcomes" that a child is supposed to "internalize."

So cognitive dissonance is not quite brainwashing, and it's not quite subliminal advertising, either. It's more like setting somebody up for a psychological fall. It plays with the mind by pitting various

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perceived "authorities" against one another and exacerbating tensions. After a while, intellectual deliberations shut down, and emotions take over. Only the strongest-willed individuals can hold out—the "troublemakers."

Classrooms are rife with examples of cognitive dissonance. Take *The Cry of the Marsh*, an environmentalist film shown in many seventh-grade science classes. It opens with an idyllic, rustic landscape—birds singing in the trees, mother ducks leading their young on a pleasant excursion down a creek, rabbits scampering over the ground. The scene oozes fresh air, sunshine, and peace.

Suddenly, a tractor-bulldozer appears. The camera zooms in on the word "AMERICAN" on the side of the yellow vehicle, which is actually the name of the company that manufactured the equipment, though young viewers are left to interpret it as "an American bulldozer." Because of the camera angle, the vehicle looks like a tank. It overturns everything in its path—shrubs, grass, plants. Exhaust fills the air.

A man jumps out of the front seat and goes over to the embankment to drain the creek where the ducklings had been following their mother. Another man brings a can of gasoline, pours it over the surrounding area, and ignites it. As the men drive away, flames leap into the air. Trees catch fire. Living creatures run for cover.

Suddenly, the ducklings—which, by that time, have emerged on the other side of the creek—are overcome by encroaching flames and burned alive. Nests of baby birds come crashing to the ground, and the camera zooms in on what is left. In a final close-up, the tractor-bulldozer is shown plowing under the remains of the nest, the ducklings, and some bird eggs.

As the scene fades from the screen, a sentence flashes: "Man cannot foresee or forestall. He will end by destroying the earth." After the film ends, pupils are divided into groups for a canned discussion activity: "Who Shall Populate the Planet?"

Why does this exercise meet the definition of cognitive dissonance? First, there is subliminal deception and psychological impact—the way "AMERICAN" is depicted, the camera angle, the carnage. The last frame in the film condemns mankind wholesale—we will kill off our own species and, possibly, the planet itself. *There is no issue to debate.* The film aims for the gut, not for intellectual discussion. For all the children know, the men were creating mayhem in the forest purely for pleasure.

Finally, the follow-up exercise requires immediate decision-making—by consensus and under pressure. By the time the children get home, they can be counted on to have forgotten the relationship of the activity to the film and, therefore, will have no context to bring to their bewildered parents, who, no doubt, will hear impassioned outbursts over the ensuing weeks and months about grown-ups "destroying our world!" Parents aren't likely either to see the film or to hear any description of the follow-up activity that triggered this reaction.

With this curriculum under their belt, youngsters are deemed prepared to weigh in on such topics as urban sprawl, nuclear waste, and global warming, all of which require considerably more advanced study than seventh-graders possess. But these particular seventh-graders, prepped as they are, will be quite full of politically correct opinions that they cannot articulate.

Cognitive dissonance is not so much about skewing questions, interjecting bias, or censoring information as it is about a controlled-stress approach to precipitating conflict and overwhelming rational thought. The tactic relies largely on obscuring the lines between "authority," "loyalty," and ego.

You didn't "brainwash" your child into believing that a teacher, policeman, or minister is an authority figure. That's much too strong a term. You did, however, transmit the notion. What happens, then, when one of those authority figures forces your child to choose among them or tries to marginalize the others? The answer largely depends on which authority figure the child spends the most time with and which one the child perceives as being the greater threat to his pride.

Thanks to a culture that increasingly keeps children with their peers and away from their parents, most youngsters today view their *classmates* as the authority figures—as the persons having the greatest effect on their ego. Unethical educators capitalize on this; they use children to punish and report on other youngsters, then call it "peer pressure" or "classroom dynamics."

Herbert Marcuse identified adolescents as the perfect targets—eager, always, to become independent of their parents but *still needy of approval*. A fan of Germany's Kurt Lewin, who conducted the first groundbreaking experiments to induce neurosis on a mass scale, Marcuse combined the anti-authoritarianism of Erich Fromm with Karl Marx's theory of alienation (people will do almost anything to avoid ostracism or ridicule) and put it to work. If you could get impressionable young people to believe they were thinking independently, even while performing mob-dependent acts, you could start a revolution, he wrote.

Marcuse went on to foment and organize (usually behind the scenes) many of the campus riots of the 1960's. He understood that it was easier to manipulate groups than individuals. In dealing with team players, you reduce the chance of "lone rangers" who attempt to solve problems on their own initiative.

The key was to blur the lines between dependence and loyalty. Marcuse's students confused group loyalty with herd approval. "We're all in this together" became a recruitment slogan. Today, it's a rallying cry for every agitator with a cause, especially in the social sciences, which, increasingly, includes education.

By placing "interdependence" over "rugged individualism" and a herd mentality over personal principle, educators have scuttled American ideals about self-reliance and personal integrity. If it is politically correct to accept promiscuous behavior as "normal" and monogamy as "religious extremism," then anyone who balks is a pariah.

Thus was my generation (the Baby Boomers) educated to "need" our peers more than we needed our principles, making us easy marks for such tactics as cognitive dissonance. Our children are now sitting ducks, with civilized norms forever under attack.

Consider the following scenario: A pregnant young woman contracts German measles. After a sonogram and an amniocentesis, she is told her unborn child has serious deformities. Two simultaneous and incompatible messages will plague this woman, both bolstered by the media: First, *If I go through with the pregnancy and birth, I am a bad person because I am opting, voluntarily, to commit this child to a tortured existence that I could have prevented.* Second, *If I terminate this pregnancy, I am a bad person because I have murdered my baby.* Conclusion: *No matter what I do, I am a bad person.*

Enter the "third party," an advertisement: *"Just do it!" "Take control of your*

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life!" "Be a decision-maker!" "Do what feels right!"

Unless this woman can "default" to firm principles one way or the other, she is a candidate for suicide. She has been given a justification for not abiding by an earlier generation's values; her ego is stroked by implying she has more decision-making power than she really has (she can't undo the German measles); she has been taught that life-and-death dilemmas are inconveniences, not moral decisions; she must choose between two opposing authorities, God and "science," under the pretext of thinking independently; and, finally, all choices are equally legitimized.

Today, cognitive dissonance is an institutionalized method used to force-feed whatever is politically expedient. In a climate where fear of alienation vastly outweighs fear of moral corruption, what has happened to "intellectual freedom"?

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ECONOMICS

Gross National Greed

by David Hartman

Editor's Note: The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which President Bush signed into law on July 30, is designed to increase corporate responsibility. It is a step in the right direction, but it fails to address the central role played by Wall Street. Some CEOs and CFOs may go to jail, but, as usual, the people pulling the strings in Washington and Wall Street will get off Scot free.

As the world economy approached the New Millennium, crossing the Bridge to the 21st Century, a "New Era" was heralded: The unprecedented economic growth of the 1990's was going to continue into eternity. The invisible hand of free markets, led by the revolution in information technology, seemed to promise no end to innovation, profits, and wealth for shareholders in the world economy and the United States in particular.

Today, however, the stock market is foundering, and the U.S. economy, mired in a recession accompanied by a falling dollar, rising energy and gold prices, and a continuing hemorrhage in the balance of trade, appears to be following the Dow. What has happened to change our outlook so abruptly? The answer is to be found in some fundamental realities about Wall Street, the United States economy, and human nature.

Socialists, libertarians, and conservatives have differing views on many economic questions, but they agree on one point: Greed drives the free-enterprise system. Socialists rail against the "unconscionable greed" that will lead, ultimately, to economic and social collapse; libertarians celebrate "unbridled greed" as the driving force of self-correcting markets; conservatives advocate "enlightened greed," restrained by a social conscience. Greed, when practiced on the scale of Wall Street, is not simply the ordinary overindulgence in food, drink, and other comforts of life. It is more than the compulsion to squirrel away savings to secure a certain standard of living, overindulgent or not. What drives Wall Street is something else again: a craving for ever-increasing wealth; the power that comes with controlling markets and enterprises; and, particularly, the lust for luxuriating like royalty.

While other major commercial centers (including London, Paris, Tokyo, and Hong Kong) play key regional roles in directing the free-enterprise system, the acknowledged world capital is Wall Street. Here, prominent investment bankers and their entourages operate the capital markets that are the prime movers of the American and world economies. To these temples of financial power, Wall Street attracts the best and brightest—and greediest—people money can buy.

History attests to Wall Street's achievements in financing the railroad, steel, and other great industries of the past. But Wall Street has also had its periods (the "Roaring Twenties," for example) when its excesses impaired its credibility and ability to function. During the 20's, a "New Era" mentality pervaded, and financial assets soared—particularly the U.S. stock market. This growth was fed by speculation, manipulation, and fraudulent accounting. The buoyant stock market drew excessive funds from American and foreign accounts, which had often been recklessly leveraged. When it became apparent that the inflated values of common stocks far exceeded rational values, the stock market collapsed. The Federal Reserve panicked and belatedly tightened the money supply, causing the banking system and the economy to collapse as well.

Inevitably, the socialists prescribed the solutions: the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, which broadened the emergency-lending capability of the Federal Reserve Bank and its regulatory powers over holding-company banks; the FDIC, established to insure bank deposits and the soundness of national banks; and the Securities and Exchange Commission, established in 1934 to regulate the issuance of securities and the financial reporting of corporations and to prevent market manipulation. These innovations did restore order, but the socialists went on to create the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Works Progress Administration, and a host of other regulatory commissions.

The parallels between 1930 and the present—in the conduct of Wall Street and the current economic imbalances in the world economy—are scary. Wall Street investment bankers who set a value on tens of trillions of dollars of stocks and bonds have degenerated, once again, into shortsighted hucksters. Pressured by underwriters to maximize the market value of their securities, corporations overstate current earnings and supply unrealistically optimistic forecasts of future earnings. Analysts endorse these forecasts in order to support their companies' related underwriting activities. The "Big Five" accounting firms (soon to be "Big Four," with the demise of Arthur Andersen) certify balance sheets with undisclosed off-balance-sheet liabilities, "restructuring" write-offs and costly stock options that bypass income statements, and bogus revenues. The overall effect is to overstate real earnings and shareholder equity grossly. Prominent law firms sign off on these distorted statements, and the SEC observes all of this with hardly a murmur.

The results are disasters such as Enron, which created the fifth-largest market value in the world in a mirage of creative accounting, and now the bankruptcy of WorldCom, which understated its costs by four billion dollars. How does

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that square with Wall Street's role as the pre-eminent securities market internationally, or the perception that the American securities market is the most transparent, best audited, and least manipulated in the world? What consequences does that imply for the continuing ability of the United States to consume beyond its means by financing a $300- to $400-billion trade deficit each year, sold to foreigners on Wall Street?

Congress (in thrall to campaign contributions) proudly accommodated the relentless pressures of the financial community by passing, in 1999, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which revoked the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act prohibitions against holding companies combining banking, insurance, and securities underwriting. Once again, the three most leveraged industries can merge here and abroad. Fortunately, the Basil Accords have required both American and international banks to maintain reasonable capital-to-liability ratios in order to create a more stable banking system. But the fact that major American banks hold $37 *trillion* in derivatives suggests that current capital-to-liability ratios are not adequate. Financial institutions engaged in too much leverage and speculation once again pose a serious risk to economic stability, as the collapse of Long Term Capital Management demonstrated.

Also contributing to bloated share prices in security markets is the lack of information available to individual investors when they are purchasing common stocks. It can be difficult to get more from a major brokerage house than simplistic descriptions of stocks, market prices, and "total return" (dividends plus appreciation) levels. Such vital information as earnings per share, book value, cash flow per share, net working capital per share, debt to equity, and coverage of obligations is usually not available. Thus, the sheep are herded into "momentum investing" (what goes up, goes up) instead of critical "value investing."

Just as in 1929, the Federal Reserve Banks created to ensure orderly growth of the money supply have, instead, joined the stock market's party. Excess growth of the money supply since 1997 has created a stock market bloated to dangerous levels not previously reached even in 1929. Although the stock market led the economy in the 90's, it will be a retarding influence this decade—our much deserved hangover.

The most flagrant misrepresentation of performance data by brokerage houses has been the covert conversion of price-to-earnings data from price-to-*actual*-earnings per share to price-to-*forecast-operating-income* per share (excluding interest, taxes, restructuring allowances, and dilution of options). This makes bloated prices look more normal compared to the past. Deceptions of this nature have contributed significantly to the flow of funds to brokerage houses from banks, in exchange for stocks of dubious value.

As gullible investors, drawn in while the markets topped and sagged, contemplate their shrunken retirement savings, they may well turn into a dangerous political force. America may be headed for another crisis of confidence in the private sector, as happened in the 30's: It is a wonder that enterprising attorneys have not yet launched class-action suits on behalf of individual investors against the major brokerage houses. The Merrill Lynch suit brought by the state of New York for conflicts of interest in analyst recommendations ought to be the tip of the iceberg—and the settlements should reflect the hundreds of billions of dollars that have been swindled.

Where have the regulators been while all this was taking place? The SEC is supposed to ensure that financial reports are representative and that security issuance and trading are subject to full disclosure. Also, insider trading is supposed to be promptly reported, and markets are not supposed to be subject to manipulation. Yet, typical of government agencies, the SEC has provided the appearance rather than the substance of oversight. Clearly, any faith in government regulation is misplaced, and investors must turn to the law for what meager satisfaction it may provide.

Wall Street's lions have been gorging themselves. The deterioration of standards on Wall Street has led directly to

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the creation of Enron, WorldCom, and "dot-com" excesses that have seriously harmed the economy and diminished the savings they have solicited from average Americans.

The investment bankers and their collaborators are not the only ones who created the bogus values on Wall Street. Corporations, from penny-stock startups to *Fortune* 500 blue-bloods, have issued an avalanche of phony income statements, overstated assets, understated liabilities, and unreal forecasts of performance. Their CEOs and CFOs, and their auditors and attorneys, know what they are doing. It is an appalling indictment of contemporary morality that their check-and-balance functions do not function, despite the fact that it would require *only one of the four* to expose corporate fraud and deceit.

The relentless demand for impossible standards of profitability and absurd predictions originates with the corporate overlords of Wall Street. Their lust for commissions and huge gains on their underwriting, supported by their corporate subjects' desire for appreciating stock options, is behind the Gross National Greed that drives the excesses of U.S. equity and capital markets.

If the free-enterprise system is to survive, this level of greed cannot be tolerated. In the best interests of the public, the laws of legitimate disclosure and stewardship must be tirelessly imposed and enforced on Wall Street and the corporations whose securities it trades. Given the scale of the rewards earned in capital markets, it is not unreasonable to expect that a comparable scale of punishment be inflicted on those who do not play by the rules.

The investment process is critical to the health of the economy; it is the engine of rising employment and living standards. Sound, long-term investments, not short-term speculations and misrepresented values, are needed to serve this vital role.

The Gross National Greed of investment banking must be subject to ethical and legal standards and to the creation of real value in the long-term interests of the general public. Otherwise, everyone will pay the price in yet another wave of regulation, confiscation, and perversion of the efficiency of genuinely free markets.

David Hartman, a recently retired banker, is chairman of the board of directors of The Rockford Institute.

CHRISTIANITY

The End of the NCC?

by Mark Tooley

The declining National Council of Churches, once the mouthpiece of America's mainline Protestant denominations, is struggling to find a new purpose. At its May 2002 board meeting, the NCC discussed its latest ecumenical outreach, an attempt to incorporate Roman Catholics and evangelicals. Called "Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.: An Invitation to a Journey," the April manifesto was signed in Chicago by leaders of most of the NCC's constituent Protestant and Orthodox churches, along with several Roman Catholic prelates, some liberal evangelicals, a Pentecostalist, and the head of the Salvation Army.

In the past, NCC General Secretary Bob Edgar has proposed that the NCC might dissolve itself in favor of a larger ecumenical umbrella that would include Catholics and evangelicals. Other NCC leaders, however, have a different vision. This latest manifesto does not specify what its goal really is. "This is an evolutionary process," NCC President Elenie Huszagh explained to the board. "[The Chicago manifesto] doesn't suggest the demise of the NCC. It's not 'either/or.' It's an ecumenical conversation."

But Edgar still seems to envision a broader group replacing the NCC, comparing the transition to the evolution of the old Federal Council of Churches into the National Council of Churches 50 years ago. He told the board that "There was an audible 'yes' that it's an important moment for the creation of a new something broader and deeper. It seems certain we're moving in that direction." He predicted the "process is moving in years, not months or decades."

Edgar was pleased that Catholics were present for the Chicago meeting in "strong voice," but he admitted that most conservative evangelicals will not want to join the process. Though he did not explain further, he presumably was referring to the apparent refusal of the National Association of Evangelicals and the Southern Baptist Convention to participate.

The manifesto laments "unnecessary divisions" among Christians and expresses hope for a "greater unity," though it offers no specific remedies. It is brief and admits that the "questions for conversation" and the "details of the way" toward Christian unity are, as of yet, unknown.

The NCC manifesto imagines a "new life together" among Christian bodies that includes engaging in common prayer, "speaking to society with a common voice," promoting the "common good," fostering "faithful evangelism," and seeking reconciliation. "Speaking to society" is problematic, as critics of the NCC have consistently complained that the organization's work is often short on theological substance and long on liberal political activism. Edgar speaks of anti-poverty advocacy as a primary theme for an expanded ecumenism.

But some NCC critics have pointed out that fighting poverty, though vitally important, is not uniquely the mission of the Christian Church. Nor is there consensus among Christians about the best way to help the poor.

Among the nearly three-dozen signers of the Chicago manifesto were William Cardinal Keeler, Catholic Bishops Tod Brown and Edwin Conway, Catholic Archbishop William Levada, Sr. Joan McGuire, United Methodist Bishop Melvin Talbert, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick, Episcopal Bishop Chris Epting, Salvation Army Commissioner John Busby, liberal evangelical activists Ron Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action and Jim Wallis of Call to Renewal, and Bishop George McKinney of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America.

Most of the signatories were from NCC member communions. The near absence of evangelicals, the questionable enthusiasm of Roman Catholics, and the document's lack of specifics call into question whether the Chicago manifesto is a significant step toward fulfilling Edgar's vision for a "broader" ecumenical body. The Chicago participants will gather again in January.

Whether the NCC will survive long enough to usher in a new ecumenical body is also an open question. Though Edgar came to office three years ago promising to end the NCC's overspending, the deficits have continued. As of the May 4 meeting, the NCC had a $406,000 deficit for the current fiscal year, out of a $6.7-million budget. Edgar claims that the budget will be balanced by year's end. But the NCC's once sub-

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stantial assets are now down to $1.8 million. The organization can endure only a few more years of substantial deficit spending. The latest financial report records the organization's assets at just over seven million dollars, nearly $2.5 million of which is clearly unavailable for ready use, in accounts receivable (two million dollars) or in property (nearly $500,000). The NCC's accounts payable and accrued expenses, on the other hand, total a whopping $5,289,885. The NCC is virtually bankrupt.

New revenues remain elusive. The NCC's largest member communions (*e.g.*, the United Methodists and the P.C. U.S.A.), have declared they will provide no more bailouts. Donations from member communions are expected to drop next year. And this year's income from foundations now stands at less than half of expectations.

Edgar and other NCC leaders spoke at length about their recent visit to the Middle East, during which they were largely critical of Israeli policies, supportive of Palestinian goals, and uncritical of the Arab leaders whom they met, including the Syrian dictator, the king of Jordan, and the prime minister of Lebanon, along with Palestinian Authority representatives. Though Edgar and other NCC leaders lamented the continuing exodus of Christians from the Middle East, no one mentioned the possibility that Islamic intolerance toward religious minorities might play a role.

This shunning of reality was typical. The NCC, though likely headed for demise, remains blithely committed to the political and theological blunders that have already made it irrelevant.

Mark Tooley is a research associate at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washington, D.C.

SOCIETY

Italy's Child-Abuse Lobby

by Alberto Carosa

Don Fortunato di Noto is a well-known Italian Catholic priest who has served as a leader in the fight against pedophilia for years, so much so that even *Newsweek* has acknowledged his work in a lengthy article. As founder and president of the helpline *Telefono Arcobaleno*, he has forcefully decried the abuse of children as a scourge of appalling and increasing proportions.

Recent developments—including the self-styled "Pedophile Liberation Front" smashed by the police in Rome—have, sadly, proved him right once again. Yet there are still those who downplay this tragic phenomenon, either accusing people such as Don di Noto of being unwarrantedly alarmist or blaming the wrong culprits (such as the traditional family, repressive morals, or consumerism).

In doing so, these "minimizers" are acting as the unwitting allies of what Don di Noto has exposed as a powerful political lobby, protecting and promoting pedophilia in Italy as something that should be accepted as sexually normal in its "soft" or "nonviolent" version. Daniele Capezzone, a national leader of the Radical Party, has justified his party's campaign against the suppression of pedophilia:

> Pedophilia, like any other sexual orientation . . . may not be viewed as an offense per se. It might become so when it translates into patterns of behavior which harm others. But the criminalization of a pedophile as such, as a category and not according to his possible violent conduct, is intolerable.

The Italian Senate has also lent *de facto* support to pedophiles. In October 1998, the Senate held a symposium that condemned censorship on the internet. Pedophilia was not condemned during the proceedings. To the contrary: The sponsors went so far as to contend that "being pedophiles, proclaiming to be so or also to support the legitimacy of pedophilia, may not be regarded as a criminal offence in a state based on the rule of law." Alfredo Ormanni, a public prosecutor who is prominent in the fight against pedophilia, told the *Corrispondenza romana* that he was shocked to realize that "the attitude of many participants [in the Senate symposium] was not contrary to pedophilia" and termed Capezzone's distinction between violent and nonviolent pedophilia "appalling."

Fabio Bernabei, who wrote the study "Does the Radical Party promote pedophilia?," argues that pedophilia is always violent, psychologically if not physically. "The legitimization of sexual intercourse between adults and children," he writes,

> is a phenomenon with specific cultural roots embedded in the anarchical and anti-prohibitionist ideology, as part of a process of dissolution of Christian principles and institutions which relates to the profound behavioral revolution of 1968.

One of the leaders of the 1968 cultural revolution, German Green Party member and MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, made international headlines not long ago for writing a book about (as the *Guardian* put it) the "erotic nature of his contacts with children at an alternative kindergarten in Frankfurt," where he had lived and worked years earlier. After a public outcry, he dismissed his writings as mere "literary exaggerations"; in the 60's, however, children's sexual emancipation was taught among leftist groups as part and parcel of the wider movement of sexual liberation. "By the late Seventies," notes the French far-left paper *Liberation* (February 23, 2001), "pedophilia was a welcome deviancy." As reported in the *Guardian*,

> Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and the current French health and education ministers Bernard Kouchner and Jack Lang were among the signatories of petitions in the 1970s calling for pedophilia to be decriminalized.

Amid a heated debate, *Liberation* tried to dismiss the pro-pedophilia campaigns by arguing that they simply reflected the "common intoxication" of the times. In addition, Cohn-Bendit has said that he has repented. Others, however, did not—in particular, Pier Paolo Pasolini. His recently published unabridged works include intimate details that he had previously omitted to avoid problems with the law. Pasolini may well be considered a pioneer of sexual tourism. According to witnesses, he was always on the lookout for children, especially in Third World countries, from Africa to India.

In a way, intellectuals such as Pasolini and Capezzone have played the same role as those who introduced opium in the 19th century: launching a fashion that was initially confined to certain elites but which trickled down to the more general public, with all its devastating effects.

Alberto Carosa is the editor of Famiglia Domani Flash, *a pro-family newsletter published in Rome.*

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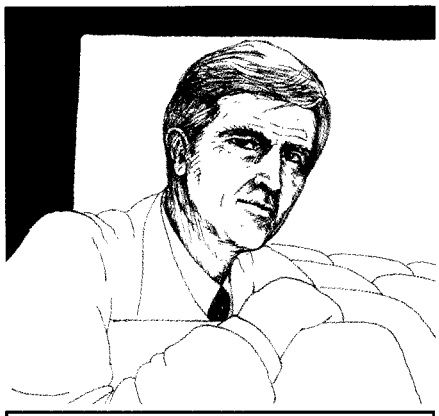
by George McCartney

Fateful Choices



Minority Report

Produced by 20th Century Fox, DreamWorks and Cruise-Wagner Productions
Directed by Steven Spielberg
Screenplay by Scott Frank
from a short story by Philip K. Dick
Distributed by DreamWorks

Men in Black II

Produced by Amblin Entertainment and Columbia Pictures
Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld
Screenplay by Robert Gordon VII from Lowell Cunningham's comic-book series
Distributed by Columbia Pictures

Despite taking its inspiration from a feeble Philip K. Dick story, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* is an extraordinarily entertaining film and, occasionally, a provocative meditation on fate and choice. As such, it improves upon its source immeasurably.

Dick wanted his 1954 story to be an Orwellian satire on America. Its premise, however, is so ungainly that it all but sinks the narrative. In 2054, American criminal justice has taken the next logical step. Cops no longer have to wait for criminals to strike. They can arrest them before they rob, shoot, or poleax their fellow creatures. How has this anticipatory police intervention been made possible? The Department of Pre-Crime keeps three idiot clairvoyants permanently installed on its premises. In one of Dick's few felicitous turns, these brain-damaged unfortunates have been dubbed "precogs" for their premonitory cognitive powers, a label that has a true techno-bureaucratic stench about it. The semicomatose pre-cogs constantly babble about things to come. The Pre-Crime task force merely has to harvest and winnow their musings to discover who will be the next ax murderer or tax cheat. The would-be offender is then whisked away to a detention camp before anything untoward can happen.

Spielberg has cleverly reworked Dick's story, expanding its scope and focusing its themes. Yet he has unaccountably held onto its weakest device, the pre-cogs. Fortunately, he handles them with more wit than Dick did. His three seers are named Arthur, Dashiel, and Agatha (as in Conan Doyle, Hammett, and Christie). Following Dick's story, Spielberg keeps them floating in an amniotic pool of drugs and nutrients, the better to muse on the evil that lurks in the hearts of men. He tries to make the mechanics of this premise semiplausible by having the pre-cogs' clairvoyance limited to foretelling upcoming murders in Washington, D.C. Prudently avoiding statistics, he doesn't bother to explain how they could possibly keep up with a homicide rate as robust as our capitol's. With the cinematic bravura for which he's famous, Spielberg finesses the issue. Before the credits, he plunges us into the world of Pre-Crime with an extreme close-up of Agatha (Samantha Morton), the most gifted precog. The screen fills with one of her eyes as she surfaces from her amniotic bath, her voice intoning: "Murder!" Next, we're watching her blurred, black-and-white pre-vision of a homicide in Georgetown. In 15 minutes, an enraged cuckold will take scissors to his wife and her lover. This is rendered in a fragmented jumble of confused images until John Anderton (Tom Cruise), chief of Pre-Crime, strides manfully to his monitoring station to make sense of Agatha's premonitions. He stands before a panel of translucent screens wearing electronic gloves with which he picks apart and reassembles Agatha's projected visions, bringing order out of their chaos. Once he does, he and his squad zip to the scene in what looks like a flying nautilus shell, arriving just in time to arrest the husband before he can dispatch the adulterers.

In the aftermath of this sequence, we watch a montage of slickly produced television spots assuring a complacent, consumerist public of Pre-Crime's essential benevolence. An announcer's voice, filled with high-grade gravitas, explains that, since the program was instituted six years earlier, every measure possible has been taken to ensure that "that which keeps us safe will also keep us free." This claim soon rings hollow, however, when Anderton returns to headquarters the following day and witnesses the pre-cogs' next vision. The projected murderer this time is himself, and he must flee his own subordinates.

Though *Minority Report* raises concerns about profiling and preventive detention that are much on our minds today, its real focus is elsewhere. The film comes most alive when it considers the ageless human longing to anticipate and, thereby, control the future. Caught as we are in the blooming, buzzing confusion of the immediate moment, who among us has not longed for such power? Who hasn't yearned to alter some moment from the past that led to future calamity? Anderton certainly has. His commitment to Pre-Crime is rooted in a personal tragedy that occurred six years previously—just before the program began. He's haunted by the moment he let his guard down and allowed hazard to disrupt his dream of moral order. (What happened is best left unspecified here. Suffice it to say, it was just about as bad as it gets.) Anderton is convinced that, had it been operating at the time, Pre-Crime could have prevented his loss. He's now committed to using its resources to protect others from similar fates.

Motivated by his yearning to expiate his failure of vigilance, Anderton demands the impossible of himself. He wants nothing less than to invest the world with an inviolable moral order. To accomplish this, he's turned police work into a type of religious ritual. When he takes his position in front of the computer screens, he first holds his arms out stiffly in a cruciform pose similar to a priest's at the Consecration during the Mass. Then, as he sweeps the pre-cogs' images this way and that, his hands repeatedly come together as if in prayer.

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It's as if he were unconsciously trying to redeem our fallen world by invoking from these violent scenes the Real Presence of suffering humanity. Just so we don't miss the parallel, Spielberg introduces Ed Witwer (Colin Farrell), a lawyer sent from the Department of Justice to oversee Anderton's Pre-Crime operation. As a young man who spent several years in the seminary before taking up his present profession, Witwer needs only a glimpse of Anderton at work to know what's going on. He calls Anderton's attention to the priestly aspect of his efforts. "The priests have always had the power," he observes. In the ancient world, he continues, they called upon oracles to assist them. If they couldn't find oracles, they sometimes invented them—the pre-cogs, for instance. Anderton angrily dismisses Witwer's speculation as mumbo-jumbo. For him, the pre-cogs are nothing more than "pattern-recognition filters." Another member of his unit, however, admits that they have been behaving "more like clergy than cops."

It's only when Agatha wakes from her trance to ask him, "Can you see?" that Anderton begins to understand. Unwittingly, his crusade to purge the world of crime has led him to play God with men's lives. Of the pre-cogs constantly at his disposal, for instance, he advises Witwer that it's "better not to think of them as human." His obsession with preventing crime has rendered him blind to more elusive evils in his midst, including his own willfulness. To see clearly again, he literally requires new eyes. In the world of 2054, the corporate American state uses laser eye-scanners to target its citizens for both marketing and surveillance. To evade his pursuers, Anderton must have his eyes replaced. The operation will have welcome side effects. As he's told by the disaffected creator of Pre-Crime, "To see the light, you sometimes have to risk the dark."

With new eyes, Anderton pursues the man he's supposed to kill. To redeem himself, he must subvert Agatha's prophecy. She gives him reason to believe he can. Despite her fateful vision, she insists that he still has choice in the outcome. The question is: What's the right choice? Spielberg renders this vividly with an extreme close-up of Agatha and Anderton composed in a Janus-like embrace, her profile turned left, his right. It's the pivotal moment in a narrative that's been fairly hurtling toward its climax. She looks back; he, forward. One wants to avoid disaster; the other, to confront it. Who is right? For an answer, Spielberg gives us a harrowing descent into Hell, during which Anderton feels himself totally forsaken. To convey this dark night of the soul visually, Spielberg indulges in some creative borrowing. He has this sequence overseen by a huge floating billboard displaying a smug male model, eyeless behind high-fashion sunglasses. It's his version of T.J. Eckleberg, the sightless god who gazes unconcernedly from a billboard on the moral wasteland of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Like his progenitor, Spielberg's pasteboard deity is imperturbably blind to human longing and despair. His appearance at this moment is part of the darkness Anderton must risk if he is to regain his moral sight. Spielberg's visual imagination has never been more effective.

Minority Report has its flaws. Spielberg almost undermines what's strongest in his film by tacking on an ending contrived to dispel the disturbing events that we've just witnessed. As usual, he can't bear to let us leave the theater unconsoled. He also tries to leaven the proceedings with the kind of glancing humor Hitchcock so skillfully deployed in his narratives. Some of these moments are ingeniously executed, especially Spielberg's variation on a scene that Hitchcock talked about but never filmed: a car being put together piece by piece on an assembly line, a mundane sequence subverted by comic mayhem. Although Spielberg inventively rises to Hitchcock's challenge, his homage to the master seems wholly out of place. Anderton's suffering does not admit of this kind of comic relief. Yet you can understand why Spielberg wants to echo Hitchcock. The Englishman knew how to balance entertainment with moral challenge. And he often did so with adroitly deployed religious imagery. Spielberg clearly wants to achieve a similar cinematic poise.

I used to think Spielberg's use of religious imagery in films as diverse as *Close Encounters*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *E.T.* was merely Hollywood bunkum, a cynical pandering to America's vague hankering for spiritual uplift. I no longer think this is true, at least not in his recent films, such as *Schindler's List* and *A.I.* Spielberg has been drawing on Hebraic and Christian imagery to give his work a fuller resonance. That he hasn't entirely succeeded doesn't mean that he won't. He's been making some intriguing choices, and, as Agatha demonstrates to Anderton, choice is as much a factor in our future as fate.

Fate plays all too large a role in *Men in Black II*—sequel fate, that is. Director Barry Sonnenfeld has chosen not to transcend its limits. His film is a hectic rehash of its forerunner, and, while it is not without its own zest, it's flavor tastes like well-wrapped day-old bread.

Sonnenfeld is nevertheless to be congratulated for confirming three suspicions that have nagged our nation for untold decades. First, Lara Flynn Boyle proves that, underneath their lingerie, those Victoria's Secret models are really hideous, man-eating Medusas from outer space. Second, nearly everyone who works for the Post Office is an extraterrestrial in disguise. And third, those cable-TV shows darkly alluding to UFOs, crop circles, and alien insurance agents are all completely true. Their poor production values are actually a ruse to hide this. The people who make these films know that the American public will never fully believe in their cheap photography, poorly lit scenarios, and tacky simulations. It takes the kind of hypertrophic special effects that Sonnenfeld deploys to win our credulity—plus Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, of course. They have returned to set us temporarily straight before neuralizing us into blissful ignorance once more. As Agents Kay and Jay, they play off each other to good comic effect, but neither brings much new to the party. On the other hand, Miss Boyle does her best to wow us with the special effect of her naked tummy, which is so corrugated with personally trained muscles that it gives the term "wasp waist" entirely new meaning. I should also mention Sonnenfeld's camera oglings of Miss Boyle's somewhat desperate décolletage. They raise a question: For whom was this film made? Clearly, its marketing tie-ins—action figures, comic books, cereals, computer games, *etc.*, target kids. Yet Sonnenfeld has seen fit to include any number of sexual references—all very fleeting, but you can't help wondering why they are there at all. I suppose some of the dads in the audience will be amused, but I suspect they will be far fewer than Sonnenberg and his crew expect.

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Fire On the Earth

The old man had understood since the summer of '88 that pigs are afraid of fire. He'd been in the pig business only three years, following his retirement from the Union Pacific Railroad, when the uncured hay in the hayloft combusted spontaneously, the barn exploded like something on a movie set, and burned to the ground. The pigs in their pens across the yard from the barn had gone berserk when the smoke cloud hit them, squealing in terror and rage and hurling themselves against the fence made solidly from ponderosa-pine boards cut from the woods beyond the clearing; a number escaped into the forest, and later one of the sows had killed and eaten two of her litter.

Though the old man had taken the episode for a sign, it encouraged him to know that the pigs could be counted on to give warning in case of a brush or forest fire. Fires were a thing he had hated for years, from the time two missionaries visited him when he was living in a rooming house close by the railroad tracks in Flagstaff and read to him out of the Bible. "I have come to light a fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!" The old man had not read the Bible before or since, but the passage stuck in his mind anyway. It seemed to him presumptuous for a person to decide, on his own, to set the world on fire and intolerable that he should have the power to do it, whether he called himself "the Lord" or not. In his retirement in the White Mountains, the old man had had ample time to brood on the outrage; also plenty of reminders during the fire season that the possibility of it actually occurring was real. In June and early July, dry lightning storms were common, while any idiot was capable of starting a fire at anytime with a campfire or a cigarette. And now, with the three-year drought and the country at war, one of these raghead terrorists had only to drop a lighted match in the woods and watch the United States go up in flames as if it were made of paper, like Japan in '45. It was on account of the danger that the old man sat out every evening on his westfacing porch, watching the blocky horizon darkened by endless unbroken forest for signs of smoke and attentive to the pigs grunting in their pens around the side of the house.

Hedda Hooper thought he was crazy and told him so, in a nice way that he was able to see straight through. She was a former Roman Catholic nun who had been released from her vows and was looking to find herself a husband, or so the old man understood. Hedda was a small woman with gray hair, a pink sunburned face, and eyes like two pieces of Indian turquoise, magnified by the wire-rimmed glasses she wore. She lived in Springerville and drove out to see him twice a week, although it made for better than a 50-mile trip. Hedda brought a bottle of red wine with her when she came, and they would drink it sitting out together on the porch, while the old man talked about Arizona in the 30's when the Apache were still raiding across the border from Mexico toward Tucson, and Hedda listened. His stories, she said, reminded her of the ones her father, who had been a railroad man also, used to tell when she was a little girl. On her first visit, he'd tried to show off his pigs to her, but she'd wrinkled her nose and said that pigs, like Satan, were too smart for their own good, and after that he hadn't taken her round to see them anymore.

Someone had informed the old man years before that Roman Catholics were the worst—worse even than the Mormons—and so he was careful to discourage her from talk about religion, especially after she'd invited him to attend Mass in Springerville with her some Saturday evening. The night they spotted the first smoke column, though, he'd grown excited thinking about the verse the missionaries had read to him years before, and excitement made him careless. "'I come to bring a fire to the earth,'" he quoted loosely, sputtering. "Who the hell does the feller think He is, anyway?"

"Those are Christ's words," Hedda explained, "and Christ is Lord of the Universe. It's His world, to do as He wants with, as He sees fit."

"That don't include setting it on fire and burning it all to flinders," the old man protested furiously. "He's got Hell to mess around in, don't He, if fire is what He's after? Why can't He leave the earth be, for Chrissake?"

"Maybe because the Earth is become Hell," Hedda suggested, "and we made it that way."

The old man didn't argue it with her. Instead, he grumbled that religion was hogwash and that, when the time came, he was planning on lighting a fire of his own.

By afternoon of the next day, the smoke column had flattened and spread itself across the mountain range, the sky was turned a purplish pink color, and the air smelled faintly acrid. The pigs pushed one another at the water trough, but when the old man brought them their meal, they snuffled at it, refusing to eat. After feeding, the old man went and sat on the porch in a worn pair of railroader's overalls to watch the smoke. At five o'clock he brought his supper outside to eat and sat until after sundown with a glass of whiskey and his pipe. In the darkness, the distant fire burned along the underside of the smoke cloud and reddened it, like flames curling beneath a chimney-place log. The smell of smoke was stronger now, and at bedtime the old man carried an army cot outside and made his bed on the porch where the fire would not take him unaware.

In the morning, the sun rose like a copper ball through scarves of greasy cloud trailing above the mountains. Facing it across the intervening hills, the smoke cloud lay stretched in a dark, billowing wall; the old man, looking from one to the other, had the uneasy feeling of being caught between the cloud and the sun. When he went to feed the pigs, he found them milling restlessly, grunting among each other and casting about with their squint, intelligent eyes. The old man carried a rifle and his portable radio with him when he went to the

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porch, but the only station he could bring in broadcast nonstop rock 'n' roll. Around noon, the telephone rang, and he went to answer it. It was Hedda, who had learned from the television that a second fire had started southeast of the first and that the two seemed to be burning toward one another. She sounded worried, but the old man pooh-poohed her. "I ain't the man to be burned out of my own house," he told her, "lessen I'm the one gets to do the burning."

He hung up the phone and went to feed the pigs, chucking the radio into the trash can on his way to the pens. The animals had stopped milling and stood with their heads down, as if glumly awaiting their fate. It occurred to the old man as he filled the troughs from the hose that, if the situation were to become extreme, he owed it to them to take down the slats and allow them to flee for their lives into the woods. As for him, he intended to stand his ground and be damned if he'd let an old man in the sky with whiskers run *him* off the property he'd paid good money to retire in peace and quiet on.

The wind shifted during the night, causing the pigs to panic for the first time. The old man got up and went out with his gun to the pens in case there were a bear after them. All he saw was the dim mass of seething backs and, in the west, the roiling smoke cloud lit by the moon above and the flames below, and he shuffled slowly back to the house carrying the gun under his arm and wishing his old dog, whose name had been Bear, were still alive, or that he'd replaced him after his death six months before.

He'd fallen asleep at last around dawn, when the telephone woke him. It was Hedda in Springerville, calling to say the Forest Service was considering an evacuation order for a wide area that included his farm. She sounded urgent, but at the same time deadly calm. In the no-nonsense voice she'd probably used with her pupils at the parochial school where she had taught for years, Hedda told him she'd be coming out in her pickup truck late in the afternoon, to help remove whatever he wished to take with him to safety. And hung up before he could argue with her. The old man stood by the phone for a few minutes afterward. Then he took his cap from its peg and went outside. It was time—and not very much of it, he knew—to act.

Across his shoulder, he could see the smoke plume from the second fire, burning around the end of a steep ridge to join with the first one, and he quickened his pace on the way to the shed where the vehicles were garaged. There, he loaded a box of oily rags, a shovel and chainsaw, and a five-gallon jerrycan of gasoline into the wagon he kept hitched to his tractor, thinking he could have made use of the plow attachment if only the Forest Service had given him warning enough.

It was a couple of miles by the old logging road down to the brushy flats above the creek, shrunk by drought to a string of stagnant pools in its gravel bed. The old man drove across the ford to the lee side, feeling the downslope breeze on his sweated back. The creek, he decided, would have to do for a fire break, though he'd have felt better with a plowed line to reinforce it. He set the handbrake and got down from the tractor, taking care to switch the engine off as a precaution against igniting the dry grass. Then he took the rags and the jerrycan from the wagon and moved off into the brush, dropping a few cloth strips every hundred or two hundred feet and dousing them with the gasoline. When everything was in place, he raced from one pile to the next, striking matches and dropping them atop the oily rags. Finally, he ran on to the tractor, swung it hard around, and drove like hell uphill from the valley along the logging road.

From on top of the ridgeline, he looked back upon the fires he had started. Several hundred feet below across the creek, a line of bright orange spots advanced bravely like soldiers under white smoke plumes in the general direction of the infinitely greater force a mile and a half away still. The old man saw that the fires were good and smiled crookedly. *This is a game two can play at,* he thought. The phone was ringing as he approached the house, but he ignored it and went to lie down on his made-up bed with the rifle beside him, feeling comfortable in his mind for the first time in days.

He awoke two hours later with the acrid smoke in his nostrils and the understanding that everything had changed suddenly. The light was gone from the sky, though it was not yet dark, and the pigs were squealing from their pens in the same hysterical way they had done the day the barn caught fire. The old man sat up all at once in the bed, grabbed the rifle, and tore from the house as if he were 20 years old again.

The wind had shifted round while he had slept, driving his fire back across the creek and up the mountainside to the top of the ridge, where it raced now toward the house, cresting from tree to tree in high explosions of orange and yellow flame, the ground fire burning forward at a slower pace. The fire had created a wind storm of its own, sucking air into its glarey lungs and expelling it with a sound like a Chinese dragon roaring. The old man saw at once that he was too late, that the house and outbuildings were doomed; no time even to hook up the garden hose and wet down the roofs and siding. The tractor and wagon stood on the turnaround, blocking the garaged pickup truck. He made a standing jump into the driver's seat, dragged the wagon clear, and ran for the pickup. The old man was backed around in the yard already and had started down the drive toward the gravel road when he thought of the pigs, leaping and shivering in their pens like fish trying to climb a falls.

His brain told him to keep on going, but he wasn't listening to it. Freed, the animals would have a chance to outrun the fire and scatter through the forest, where, in time, they would become a self-sustaining population of feral hogs. He braked the truck hard, jumped down, and hobbled back to the pens whose slatted sides creaked and bulged under the impact of scores of hurled heavy bodies. The gate shuddered beneath his hands as he worked the latch, but he got it open finally and stepped clear, as he thought, of a few hundred tons of pent and panicked pigflesh.

Roaring up the driveway in her truck, Hedda Hooper was in time to see a large herd of parti-colored swine stampede across the unscathed clearing toward the rolling cloud of smoke and vanish as one animal into the flaming woods behind it. Later, she discovered the crumpled body lying in a litter of sharp-pointed pig tracks thick as fallen leaves; but, time having run out for the old man, soon or late didn't matter very much. ©

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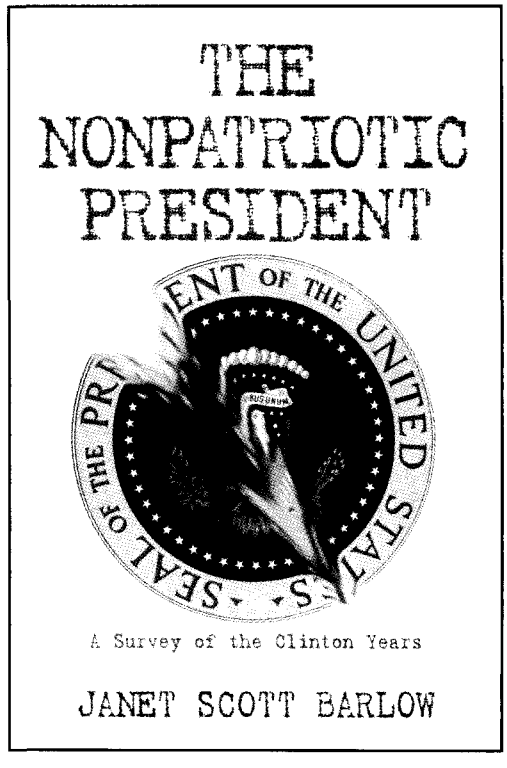

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Americanization Is Un-American

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